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Gordon Young
Chester L. Saxby
Hugh Pendexter
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Alan Sullivan
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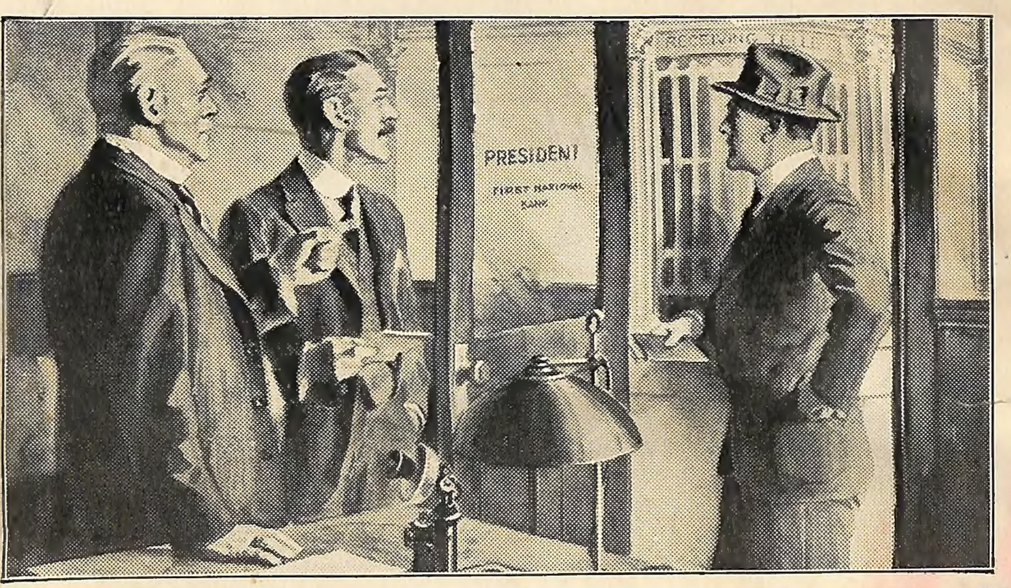

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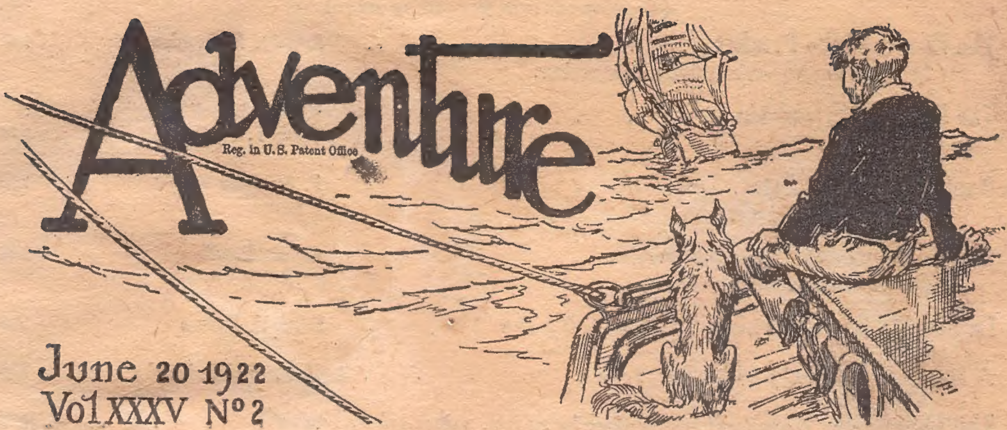
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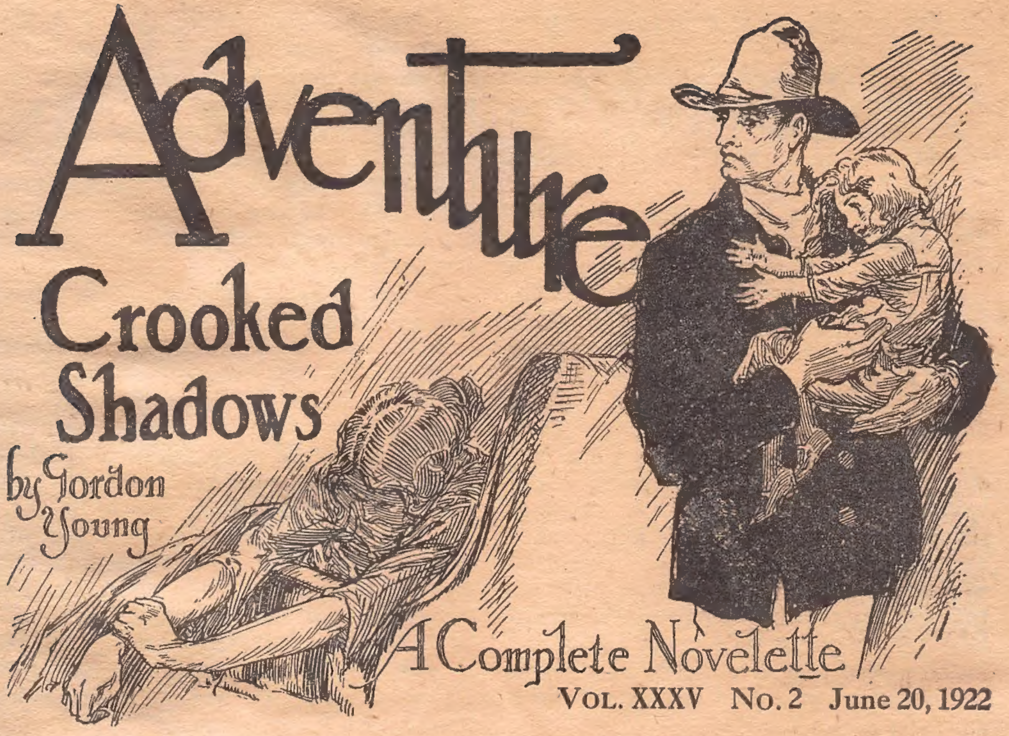

Adventure

Crooked Shadows

by Gordon Young

A Complete Novelette

VOL. XXXV No. 2 June 20, 1922

Author of "Dead or Alive," "Shipwreck," etc.

A GREAT castle of a house fastened down on the side of a Verdugo hill overlooks the City (so-called) of Angels that lies miles away, and in the darkness sleeps under a veil of shimmering spangles.

From a distance—for heavy gates of rusting, grilled iron bar the entrances that lead to the house a half-mile or more back from the boulevard—it is pointed out to tourists as another of the extravagant whims taken up and abandoned by Sara Brand; which is a name that a good people mention with raised eyebrows and drawn mouths, and other people have even less respect for her name than that.

The big, massive mansion sits among a wide acreage of withered landscaping. The flowers and shrubs have perished unattended under the Summer's heat. It is almost as if the house symbolized a woman squatting in brooding loneliness amid dried bridal wreaths and ruined gifts; it sits there unattended and grows dirty, dusty, rotten.

All the furnishings are in the house, extravagant furnishings; for it was a home Sara Brand had built to be happy in. Beetles and moths nest in the rugs of silk, and spiders festoon the walls as if consciously rivaling the weavers who had made the tapestries that are hanging there. A house is a sentient being and must have warm, living flesh within it, or it suffers; and Hill Dome, as it was called, once rang with laughter and the tattoo of rapid, dainty feet. The laughter at times may have been a little drunken, the feet not always steady; and there was the click of the roulette ball that had a sound like the devil counting souls on an abacus.

II

I WAS a very young man, young and green, when first I saw Sara La Verge, afterward Madame Brand. Sara La Verge was a name of her own choosing, picked up somehow by fancy.

She was rich, or nearly so, even then; and what is of greater value to a woman, wearing the bloom of a dark, velvet-like beauty that was not rivaled by any of the women she knew. In those days she was recklessly happy and boldly unashamed if not proud

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of being pointed out as a notorious actress and woman.

San Francisco was a glad, bad, mad city in those days before the visitation of fire and quake humbled her insolent gaiety; and now in her new, outwardly clean garments she sits by the gateway to the sea and, modest of bearing, broods longingly on her joyfully evil youth. Madame Brand typified her city; only if anything she was even less regretful of her joyous, sinful youth, however much she grew to wish for clean, modest garments and a fair welcome among proud people.

She must have been born with the star of fortune on her forehead. Unless one knew her intimately enough to know what miseries she had, her "sinful" life seemed one of happiness and perpetual rewards. At sixty she appeared to have everything that a woman could reasonably want, especially wealth, enormous wealth. But years, as they pile on us with the noiseless weight of falling snow, change the sense of values; and for all people who have money there seems to come a time when they feel it is not worth anything.

She had the random luck of a Fortunatus. Money had always come to her as if her fingers were magic. She wastefully spent enough of it to have impoverished a king, but her wealth grew and grew.

A United States senator had married her, thereby wilfully throwing over his chance of reelection. California, with something of the frontier freedom of manner and morals that lingered until the great invasion from the corn belt of the Middle West, never cared much about the private life of her politicians—but Sara was too notorious to be a senator's wife. Yet Brand married; and he must never have regretted it, for when he died he left to her every dollar of his wealth.

And Madame Brand—if she threw a dollar into a hole in the ground, lo, it became a gold mine. She cared nothing about money, but was so angered at being cheated that she hauled those who had business dealings with her around over the coals pretty lively. She said often and emphatically:

"Now look here. I don't care how much my expenses are, but I want to know what they are and why."

She knew that everybody was trying to swindle, cheat and overcharge her, and it was far more a combative than a thrifty spirit that watched over her accounts; though she must have had a genius for business, about which she cared nothing.

The ambition of her life, one that had existed for many years and which I know caused her to marry Senator Brand, whom she did not love any more than, if as much as, she had loved other men, was to get into *good* society.

It was pathetic, ridiculous and tragic; intensely tragic.

Sara Brand in her youth had not cared a snap of her pretty thumb and slim finger for an opinion from anybody who was not a good judge of physical beauty and fine wines; and yet she wanted to be admired by everybody, as she afterward seemed to have the desire that everybody should like her.

The first time she saw me I was a tall, rather skinny youth with a thin face, and even then with the coldly alert air that comes to every man who may any minute have to whirl and shoot—shoot in split seconds and shoot straight as an eye's glance—if he doesn't want to entertain his friends with his own funeral.

It was along toward morning at a mask ball with which some politicians were celebrating their election, reelection, or something of the kind. At that hour, of course, every one was unmasked; with all the women in gay colors, bizarre costumes, picturesque, startlingly vivid, flushed with beauty, gaiety, wine, dancing and making merry.

I was not there as a merrymaker, but with a message to a friend whom I could not find.

Sara La Verge was at a table in company with two pretty girls and three or four men, all of them important figures politically or in sporting circles; and one of them was Dr. Keith Keble, a brilliant young physician from a family of social importance, who got a good deal of his recreation in Sara La Verge's company.

Some one pointed me out to her as a fellow who was being talked of a good deal owing to the fact that recently a coroner's jury had twice let me off, largely because both the dead men were known gun-fighters and quarrelsome.

A politician dressed as a *vaquero* with a gun about two sizes too large for him swinging in a holster, came up to me and said agreeably enough that Miss La Verge asked if I would not come to her table and have a glass of wine with her friends.

I was extremely youthful and perhaps a little top-heavy with a sense of my own importance. Then, as ever since, I resented that imperious caprice with which every woman who is sure of herself calls and dismisses a man. Besides, I did not drink—anything.

I gave the *vaquero* a cool answer. He regarded me for a moment with about the same expression as would have come on to his face had he discovered that I had a third leg or a double nose; then walked off.

No doubt my rudeness grew with his telling of it; and he told of it in the presence of her companions. Sara La Verge enjoyed anything remotely like humiliation about as much as a proud-spirited man enjoys having his nose pulled by dirty fingers; and her face flared at what she thought was insult.

I learned afterward what she said; and how she blazingly declared that the young fool who called himself an Everhard needed to learn manners. She told her *vaquero* to bring me crawling on my knees to her that I might the better know how afterward to receive the favor of women. She told him that I got my name as a killer by shooting drunken men when their backs were turned.

The *vaquero* was pleased to treat the matter lightly and try to dismiss the incident by pointing out that I was only a spoiled kid with a swollen head The peacemaker is seldom wanted by an angry woman. She scornfully accused him of being afraid.

With rising anger she delegated the racehorse owner in a domino to teach me manners; but it seemed that he too was a peaceful citizen. The girls at the table openly snickered at her.

She appealed to Keith Keble, who was garbed as a red devil; but the gay young doctor said with whimsical frankness that he never bothered any but sick men. Keble had courage, but Sara La Verge was in no mood to admit it just then; especially as the two girls had laughed outright, no doubt at his jest, but she felt they were laughing at her.

The first thing I knew I was face to face with a tall Indian maiden. As much anger was in her eyes as I have ever seen, and some very angry people have gazed at me with a basilisk rage. She wore jacket and skirt of soft chamois covered with intricate and brilliant figures of beadwork. Her long hair fell to her waist in thick black braids. Tall red feathers flared above her head.

She had snatched the *vaquero's* revolver from his holster, and he was the sort of fellow who carried bullets in a gun he would not have used except to contribute a little noise in the observance of July Fourth. She put the muzzle within six inches of my breast, and her left hand was extended out and downward.

She was always a woman to say what she meant. The dexterity of polite phrasing was something that later in life she tried hard to acquire. Her tongue was not a rapier. It was more like a spiked club. The extended hand vibrated tremblingly from the anger she felt; and she said—

"Kiss my hand, Mr. Don Everhard!"

Hard, contemptuous stress fell on the "Everhard."

People stupidly crowded about us. Why no one knocked up the gun or wrenched it from her I do not know. Perhaps they were curious. It is human nature to be a little pleased when the woman, if beautiful, is humiliating the man. Besides, I was an outsider in that gay crowd, of which she was a favorite.

I looked from her face to the extended hand. Her fingers glittered with diamonds. Always, like almost all women, she had a love of stones.

I looked again into her face. Even then I was making such a livelihood as I got for myself at the card-tables; and a card gambler will starve if he can not keep from showing what he feels.

It is no use to try to say what I felt or thought. I *knew* very well that if I bent my head as low as she held her pretty hand that I could never again raise it among the people who saw me do so or among others who heard that I had done so.

It meant nothing that I was heavily armed, and was then just about as quick with a gun as later when the speed and accuracy I had became more widely known. If she had been a man he would have been taken to the cemetery the next afternoon and a third coroner's jury would have brought in a verdict that it was bad luck to point a gun at a fellow without instantly pulling the trigger. I could have snatched at the gun, knocked it to one side perhaps, made a scuffle and forever afterward been known as the man Sara La Verge scared into convulsions.

Also it must be remembered that I was inexperienced in the ways, or at least in some of the ways, of women. I don't know a great deal more now, but I have greatly increased my suspicions.

Again I looked down to her hand.

"Did you hear me, Mr. *Ever*hard?" she demanded, her voice strained to harshness.

I reached out with slow movement and gingerly touched the tip of her thumb, turning her hand over slightly, examining it; and, looking once more into her angry eyes, said as quietly as I could, barely shaking my head—

"A very pretty hand; but—no."

She shot.

The scar is there yet, a little below and to the left of my heart. The blow from the bullet half-turned me around, so that I staggered; and some one caught hold of me; but I had no wish to appear to be dying. I straightened up as well as I could.

There was a flurry of commotion, high voices, cries, a scurrying and pressing-in of fantastic figures in maskers' garb. When some one is hurt the curious crowd seems always inspired with an almost vulturous desire to smother him. The mob loves to look at flowing blood and mangled bodies.

Sara La Verge stood dazed and motionless, the gun down before her. The crash of the shot had jarred her into something like a realization of what she had done.

For once in my life I was gallant; but as I have repeatedly emphasized, I was very young. I think that I smiled. At least I tried to. Anyway I was not excited; and I said:

"Another gun that wasn't loaded. I was told you would play a joke—that is why I was so brave."

Then, reaching down a bit unsteadily, for I was hit harder than I thought, I took the gun from her, and, dropping it into my pocket, walked toward the door; but a devil in red velvet from the top of his head to his toes took hold of my arm. It was Keith Keble.

I landed in the hospital with a badly congested lung. I don't know what all the police learned, for even eye-witnesses never coincide; but I refused to admit it was not an accident. The newly reelected politicians bore down with all their weight, and the papers and police had to treat the incident as an accident.

Keith Keble hung over me as if I were of some importance in the world. It was pure gratitude; for the brilliant, wayward boy actually loved the girl.

And every day, in an open carriage behind prancing bays, her arms full of flowers for the whole city to see, the beauteous Sara La Verge visited me. The first visit or two were made in tears and humbleness; but after that, by her gay joyous manner that gave magic to her beauty, she showed me why men laid their heads at her feet. Not that my head was ever there. I think something better of it than as a football for pretty, sharp-pointed slippers.

From that time on I had a friend who was rather unreasonable and tempestuous at times; but she was no fair-weather, soft-spoken friend. All of her life she had a good deal of influence; if not herself with people of importance; and those who wonder how I have so undeservedly escaped being hanged must blame her for much of my luck.

Almost every man who knew her liked her.

A bookish, scholarly man who brought a professorial salary to a poker-table where I sometimes sat, told me that he had never quite understood the appeal that Nell Gwyn had for the great men and public of her day until he had met Sara La Verge.

I put on the wise air with which youth tries to conceal its nakedness and said that he was right; then scurried around until I found a book that told me Nell Gwyn was an English slum girl, frank, bold, vivacious and honest, who became the acknowledged mistress of a fastidious, pleasure-loving king.

Years later, many years, when Senator Brand married Sara La Verge it did not seem so amazing to me as to other people who had not played poker with a professor of English history. It was amazing to me because I knew that she was reaching toward high society. She wanted to force an entrance.

I had seen it coming for a long, long time, this social fever. Even in the heyday of her beauty and not entirely pleasant fame as an actress there began to be a curiously strong interest in the social affairs of Nob Hill.

One of the important San Franciscan families was the Carrolls, related to the Kebles. It got so that when Sara La Verge opened the paper, no matter how many cops had been shot the night before or what was said of the play, she plunged through to the society page to read what the Carrolls were doing.

I knew what they were doing. They were going crazy, all of them, over little Kate Carroll. Kate was about as much like a Carroll as a fairy is like a grocery clerk; and the Carrolls were grocers. True, they had their own ships and brought in teas, coffees, spices from all the world; they owned heavy interests in fisheries, orange-groves, and various other of what might be called edible industries. They were blue-eyed, well fed, solid, honest, generous, and sat on Nob Hill with unaffected distinction; and they were sure that the shipping clerk in heaven had made a mistake and sent them a baby angel instead of a Carroll.

She did not look like a Carroll. It must have been the Keble blood in her. Keith Keble's sister had married the son of old George Carroll; and the Carrolls worshiped her as the only granddaughter in a child-loving family can be worshiped. And at the age of three and a half Kate began causing trouble.

Keith Keble, as he often did, took her for a ride in what he called his Medicated Roadster. It was on a Sunday afternoon and I was in a poker game in one of the private rooms of the private gambling-hall of Dan McFarland.

There was a big jack-pot on the table. Poker as played was money in those days. You couldn't buy a hatful of chips for a quarter. Old George Carroll, solid, cautious, beaming, was having a great time. He liked poker and could afford it. He never lost his head and not a great deal of his money, though he would back a hand to the limit and bluff like an old bulldog that didn't have a tooth in its head.

He would not play with strangers, but had never considered me as a stranger because he had known my grandfather, old McDonald Richmond who, as I now was, had been the black sheep of the family in his generation. Some of the old-timers who had known him best, Mr. Carroll, Sr., among them, put above McDonald Richmond's grave a tablet with these words on it—

He never failed a friend or broke his word.

There are other virtues in the world besides these; but if everybody lived up to these the others would not be greatly needed.

This jack-pot was almost too big for my comfort. All the face cards had gone into hiding, and the sweetening process had used up everybody's chips, so that rolls were being stripped. I had some Confederate bills in the core of my roll to give it bulk. It is ruinous to a gambler's reputation not to appear always to have plenty of money; but it had got to where the skin of a twenty-dollar bill was all that covered the worthless money, and there was something over eight thousand dollars huddled into the center of the table.

Dan McFarland was dealing. With the swift grace of his flexible wrist he shot the cards true as arrows skimming across the table. The telephone rang, and the Chinese boy came to the table and said Mr. Carroll's home was calling.

Mr. Carroll was under the gun. He got up slowly, paused to lean over and look at the next card that fell, then with a genial growl said—

"You boys wait till I tell my wife I won't be home for supper; then I'll come back and pocket this pot."

The four of us sat waiting for him to come back. It was his first say as to whether or not he could open it. He had left after looking at two cards. I skinned down the pips of my hand and gazed upon three royal gentlemen. I was wondering desperately what excuse I could give for opening or staying in a pot for only twenty dollars when I put the hand down and never got to look at it again.

Mr. Carroll groaned. He reeled back from the telephone and reached drunkenly about in the air before the Chinese boy put a shoulder under his arm. We were all on our feet and moving to him. He was a rare, lovable old man. His red, full face had turned white as soiled paper. Others were hurriedly asking what was the matter, but I picked up the dangling receiver and asked:

"Will you please say what is the matter? Mr. Carroll is too greatly shocked to——"

A hysterical woman's voice told me; but before she had finished Mr. Carroll with racking effort gasped, or really sobbed—

"Keith has been murdered and the baby—gone—stolen!"

That told all that was known to tell.

We all knew about Kate. We had known about her from the time she was a week old. Mr. Carroll carried each new picture and had told us with grand-paternal detail of her colicky nights, her first goo-goo, her first step, word, and all about her dresses and caps. When she began to talk he repeated to us the bright things she said. None of us knew anything about babies, so she and her remarks seemed quite wonderful.

It was as if we knew her, had helped discharge and engage her nurses, had played with her, watched by her crib when she had the sniffles. For almost four years she had been a little invisible fairy.

Dan McFarland, big and gentle and courageous, walked to the table, and, scooping all the chips and money into a closer heap, cried—

"What d'you say, boys—this pot starts the reward?"

That settled it, or rather began it; for he stripped big bills from his roll and others did the same. I laid my twenty-dollar bill on the pile, furtively covering it with one five times as large so my offering would not seem quite so small.

Two of the men, his closer friends, took Mr. Carroll home. Another, who had some weight at the police station, hurried there. McFarland and I remained to count the money.

It was a Sunday afternoon, but one of the papers got out an extra. Everybody knew Dr. Keith Keble; the Carrolls were as prominent as almost any family; and kidnaping always stirs the public pulse.

By sundown the city was talking on street corners and along the crowded bars of the crime.

Keith Keble's body had been found in an alley not far from Portsmouth Square, the back of his head knocked in, the pockets robbed.

Two brothers, shoemakers, with the leathery, sedentary, yellowish countenances of shoemakers, had a basement hole in the alley; and they said they had heard loud voices, a child's among them. One of the brothers looked out and saw Dr. Keble with a little girl in his arms, talking with two men, strangers.

The shoemaker, he said, listened for only a few seconds and thought nothing of the matter. Loud voices were often heard in their alley. He and his brother lay down for an afternoon smoke, dozed off, and were awakened by excited people saying that Dr. Keble had been murdered and the child stolen.

The shoemakers were lamentatious over the fact that their doze had kept them from preventing murder. Being known as of a miserly nature they, I thought, probably regretted the chance of reward money, for their description of the strangers to whom Keith Keble had talked was rather blurred by contradictions and hesitation.

Early that evening I heard that Sara La Verge had been trying frantically all afternoon to reach me. I was sorry for her, but I don't like to be around weeping women. However, she was trying so persistently and had told so many people to tell me, that I telephoned.

"I must see you. I *must.* I know who did it," she said.

A woman usually says "I know" when what she means is that she has some vague suspicions founded on nothing more than her mysterious sense of intuition.

I told her—

"There is about ten thousand dollars waiting for you to claim it then."

"Don't talk that way, Don. You *must* come. I am in a terrible— I can't explain. Come, won't you? Please come? You will, won't you, Don?"

I said, "No."

She cried at me:

"Why? Why won't you? Oh, you are the only friend I have, Don——"

When a woman tells any man that he is her only friend, he can be reasonably sure that she is preparing to get him into trouble.

I again told her no.

Then she said:

"Wouldn't you do anything to find the Carroll baby? . . . Well then, why don't you come? I know where to look—honest! If it isn't the truth may I die this minute!"

I said that I would come. I did not believe her. I thought that, woman-like, she was using any appeal to get her way; but gamblers live by chances, and I wondered if perhaps she didn't know a thing or two.

Sara La Verge was a luxury-loving creature, and never entirely got over the idea that price made beauty in bric-à-brac and textiles. It was said that she made much money even at this time by getting expert and confidential advice on when to buy and sell mining-stocks; and she must have had some sort of excellent training in speculative ventures, for in after years when handling a big fortune she was not easily victimized, and gambled in stocks with a decision and assurance that women do not often have, nor men either.

At this time it was evident to any who cared to observe, that she lived beyond the salary that any stage manager could have even pretended to give her. But her money affairs were something which, if she did not always keep to herself, were at least not scattered about on the lips of her friends. She always kept business matters pretty much under cover.

It would take somebody who knows all about such things to describe intelligently the arrangement and furnishings of her apartment.

I know that quite recently she had grown tired of a red-and-black color scheme, and had been staying at a hotel until the cyclonic decorators had replaced it with peacock blue and cream. I did not care for the result.

She loved velvets even more than silks; and gold fringes perhaps most of all. She liked almost anything that was strong with color, which is I believe a primitive liking found in savages. There was nothing anemic and shy in her nature, but much that was warm and generous; and no matter how she cluttered up her rooms with blue vases and wax peach-blossoms, teakwood dragons, purple rugs, cream curtains and furniture full of hand-made worm-holes, the sense of being welcome always came to you as the door opened.

I was better known in many other places than there, for the best way to get along with a woman is to stay as far off as possible; besides, I was in her debt for nothing at all.

She must have been standing at the door waiting for my footsteps because she opened the door before I was near it; and she stood waiting.

There could be dispute as to her having beauty. It might not be of the kind that would win the prize where blonde ladies served as judges, and the sort of artists that have painted consumptive angels dragging their weary lengths down celestial stairs would not have picked her for a model.

She had vivid, dark eyes, and health. She had more health than I remember ever to have seen in a woman. Her buoyancy was tireless. Neither late hours nor long years wore her down. The best of the fairies that came to her christening came with the gift of Vitality. She was alive from toes to finger-tips; nothing seemed to tire her except some of the men who wanted her to leave the stage and marry them, or rather some one of them.

I noticed, for I try to notice everything that I see, that sadness had increased her beauty. She wore a gala dress of embroidered Indian muslin with a broad girdle edged with gold. Always she carried her head high, and hers was as black as any hair that ever a woman had. She may have stained it, for anything that I know. Certainly it looked as if it were polished—blue black, and shimmered under light like a blackbird's wing in the sun.

Sadness adds beauty to many faces, and tears were right at the edge of her eyes. She had loved Keith Keble.

She said:

"Thank you for coming, Don. I can't thank you enough." She spoke very low. "Keith—Keith—oh!"

Her handkerchief went to her face, and I saw her teeth fasten on it; but in a moment she smiled and blinked away the moisture in her dark eyes, which were not now full of fire.

"Keith was here—here—just a little while before they found him. Oh!"

She half-turned her face and again lifted the handkerchief.

I have never seen the good of letting a tongue run itself, for there is plenty of embarrassment and trouble to be got in other ways; so though the impulse to say, "He brought that baby *here?*" had been on my tongue, I did not say it. Instead I remained silent.

And in the silence I remembered three or four years before, standing at an up-stairs window of Dan McFarland's and looking down into the street on a rainy afternoon. A hearse went by, followed by two or three carriages. The equipage was extravagant, the following meager. The day was leaden and drizzling.

My sympathies are not easily touched by the sorrows that attend death; for who knows—certainly not those living—but that on the prenatal side there is much weeping and lamentation at birth, and rejoicing again at the return when our broken lives and their crooked shadows are taken off the earth? I am cold-blooded, I have been told, and it is no doubt true; but when Dan McFarland—big, generous, quiet man—made a gesture toward the street and said in a deep, soft voice, "Sara La Verge follows her first born to the grave," I, being very young then, felt deeply sorry though I had not yet seen Sara La Verge except at a distance.

After I had remembered that, I spoke to her and asked with scarcely any appearance of interest—

"Did Keith have the baby with him then?"

She looked at me quickly, sharply, scrutinizing my face, which had but little more expression in it than the jack of knaves whom, she often said, I resembled in appearance and character.

I thought at first that she was about to say something impulsively confidential, for she made a slight movement toward me, but stopped; then:

"Yes. Keith had the baby with him."

But the way she spoke made a question of it. She was looking at me closely, trying to get at what I thought; and since I appeared to think nothing at all of it she said slowly—

"Don, you are the only person I care—*dare*—to trust."

I made no comment. I was not sure that it was a compliment. She went on:

"Somebody has to do something for me. You will, won't you?"

I gave no shadow of a promise, but asked what it was.

"Come," she answered, and held out her hand beckoningly as she turned toward the door of the next room. "Don't make a noise. I'll show you something."

She walked on her toes, and I moved as quietly as I could across the polished floor overlaid with rugs of cream-colored silk figured with gold.

"Shh," said Sara La Verge as she came to the door; and when I stood beside her she opened the door slightly and I peered across her shoulder.

Inside of the room, sitting on a cushion before a small table, with an enormous, long-haired cat half in her lap and half beside her, was a beautiful, dark, curly-haired baby girl intently watching an old Chinaman build a Temple of Wonder on the low table with black blocks inlaid with ivory. They were very happy.

The Chinaman I knew. He belonged to Sara La Verge, heart, body, soul and pocketbook. He was an old withered fellow, Ah Quong by name. He wore brilliant holiday garments and bent over the table singsonging a merry chatter to the tiny dark maiden as his long fingers of old ivory dexterously piled the blocks into shapes of fairy architecture.

The big cat with languid playfulness stroked upward toward the child's face to attract attention to itself. It was a thing of monstrous beauty, that cat. There were times when its steady, unblinking, penetrative, yellowish-green eyes seemed looking through and through me, and though no cat, even though it has forty yellowish-green eyes, can disturb my peace, I wouldn't want to be on a desert isle with a woman that had such eyes.

It was a beautiful cat, as cats go; a great female, and no man could fondle it. If any man stooped and grabbed it, great hooked claws would rip his clothes or even face. Somewhere, perhaps three thousand years ago in Egypt according to Sara La Verge, the soul of that beauteous feline had learned that the petting of men could be wisely received only with teeth and claws.

Ah Quong seemed to be telling a story. His voice rose and fell rapidly with weird musical fluctuation of the Chinese consonants, and he bobbed his head and glanced smilingly at the small autocrat enthroned on a cushion of iridescent purple with gold fringe.

He sensitively caught the noiseless click of the opened door, or else, feeling with what is vaguely called psychic sense—no one can intelligibly define such sense, though its presence is inescapable—the gaze of our eyes, he glanced toward us, seeming in one briefest of moments to stab my face with eyes as darkly veiled as extinguished coals; and without a pause he went on with the play and the child did not notice.

She beat her little hands together with glee as a sparkling minaret rose to crown a tower that Ah Quong had reared as if with fairyland magic.

Sara La Verge closed the door and motioned that we should cross the room again before speaking; and when we had got to the other side of the room I asked as quietly as a man can ask when he knows of no other question half so important—

"The baby has been here all afternoon?"

She answered hesitantly, "Yes."

A woman's yes may mean anything; so I said it was important that she say it again and not so doubtfully.

"Yes, Don. I was thinking of something else. Yes, she has been here every second."

I believed her, and it was true. But she looked at me in such an odd way that I knew something was hidden away at the back of her head; and that something would probably not be given a tongue unless I coaxed. I coax no one. At times I demand; but usually I let people keep their affairs to themselves.

Her fingers were hooked together tightly; her arms trembled; she seemed chilled, almost shivering.

"You want me to get her home without the Carrolls learning where she has been?"

"Oh, Don—yes! But—Don, *Don*, what would you say if I—just supposing—Don, would it be terrible if I kept her?"

She put her hands toward me with more of a rewarding than imploring gesture; with something of feminine bribery in her manner.

I stepped back and waved her hands off.

I don't mean that Sara La Verge had in mind to tempt me; but women—all women; it is born in them—think the pressure of arms or lips full payment and more for whatever at any time is required of a man.

Some fellow, a first-class scoundrel and therefore a finished diplomat, by the name of Walpole, once said that every man has his price; so I suppose that I too have mine. But it is neither women nor money; and as women have nothing to offer but themselves, and men little but money, it is not often that I am bought.

As the best way of answering so baseless a question, I ignored it; and said:

"This isn't the first time Keith brought her here? Often? She seems at home."

Sara La Verge nodded reluctantly, and with something not unlike guilt, like a fear of being reproached, watched me. Real tears—though it is stupid to call any woman's tears real—were in her eyes. I know this much about women and nothing more: Their mental processes are beyond my understanding; they will tell the raw truth when every instinct of discretion and personal advantage should inspire secrecy if not falsehood; and they will spin some elaborate untruth when there is no reason for deception and no conceivable advantage to be got.

And though she spoke with emotion, and though I had seen the funeral carriages pass in the drizzle, I had a strong impression that she was telling me something that was not true when she said falteringly:

"You knew, Don, didn't you, that I had—that I buried a little girl? She would now be just Katherine's age. And—and God knows I love this—*this* baby now more than anything in the world.

"Keith knew how I—how lonesome and hungry I was. He brought her every week. One afternoon every week. He came the back way, so nobody knew.

"I know what *you* think. But the child, she doesn't even know my name. She talks about the 'lovely lady' at home, and they think it is some imaginary person. And it is wrong of you, Don Everhard, it is *wrong* of you to think it a crime for me—*me*—to hug such an innocent, to kiss her hair, to make her happy one or two little hours a week.

"You don't know, you or no other man—no other except poor Keith—knows how much I have paid, in more than blood, too—in heart-aches and soul-aches, and it isn't wrong! I tell you, it isn't wrong! I am not a monster!"

She was a woman as well as a professional actress too. I believed she was sincere; at the same time I had the ineffaceable impression that there was something poignantly untrue in what she said; but when women are emotional I scarcely ever dare believe them.

Anyway I was not greatly impressed. I know nothing of heart-aches, even less of soul-aches.

The right and wrong of it, on which her emphasis was stressed, was none of my business. According to authorities who claim to be well informed, at the great day of doom God will dry the seas and roll the earth into a scroll whereupon to write down His judgments of the good and bad, the right and wrong that we have done.

It is my inexpert opinion that a lot of pious people are going to be astonished that He will not think so very highly of them for bullying the less pious; and by the same inexpert opinion I do not think it enough that people should be merely sincere and honest, for all the torture and most of the bitterness in the world is made by patriots and fanatics, who are honest as people can be, and as cruel. Every sort of creed has been tried but that of kindness—but I am writing of other than theological tragedy.

AND then when I knew that the child was unharmed and unendangered my thought swung around to the murder of Keith.

He had been a friend of mine; and the iron code of friendship binds the living to the dead. Of all the things in the world that I hate most it is the unpunished murderer.

Keith Keble was my friend, though our ways of life were widely different. He was brilliant and reckless, a fine surgeon, a ruinous spendthrift of both money and health. In rash gaiety he burned the candle at both ends. As surely as he lived, he would soon have broken down and been worthless. He went too fast a pace to be slowed down by anything but a smash-up. His friends were many, high and low, for he had a generous, lovable personality. He would as soon take a newsboy off his crutches as put a banker on the operating-table; and because he worked hard he wasted himself in the relaxation of night life.

And I—while I lived a night life of my own and was more at ease in the lower than in the upper world where the crooks wear tall hats and hire good lawyers instead of shysters—was nothing but a business-like card player. Keith Keble had said that excepting the cards I had all the faults that a deacon should have. I was not a good fellow. No one ever patted me on the back. But he seemed to enjoy having everybody like him, and he was about the only person of that kind I ever knew that I did like.

I had had not the faintest idea when I came into the room who could possibly have killed Keith Keble; but I now had very strong suspicions. It is one thing to know who does a crime; it is another and usually even more important thing to find out why.

I said to her:

"You told me that you knew who killed Keith. Who?"

She looked startled. Perhaps the abruptness of it brought her almost violently from one sort of mood into the anguish of again remembering that he was dead. Death is incredible just after some one has gone from our presence and the word comes back that life is ended. I believe that people stare into the glass of the coffined figure less out of curiosity than from the need of convincing themselves that the friend has ceased to live.

She looked at me with sorrowful inanition, hesitant, doubtful; then slowly and slightly shook her head.

"You said you knew." I spoke coolly.

"But please, Don——"

I looked at her, and waited.

"I had to make you come. I couldn't say the baby was here—over the phone."

She paused hopefully, but I was not in an encouraging mood.

"Who do you say would have been most likely to do it?" I demanded, and there was not much of friendship in my manner.

Some people have seen fit to say that when I am angry I am a good deal like a snake in the path and show nothing but a readiness to bite; which is an unpleasant sort of simile but at least conveys that neither people who know me well nor strangers have any trouble in understanding when I am in earnest.

"Don!"

There was something imploringly evasive in the way she said it, as if I was cruel to suspect she would not tell the truth, heartless to be so unsympathetic at a time when she was miserable. But however much a woman's tears may move you, you are trumped, at a disadvantage, have the lower hand, the moment she knows the sympathy is touched. I said:

"Tell me somebody's name. Make a guess."

"Oh, Don, it *must* have been a thug—down in that quarter, you know."

"People are not murdered in daylight for what they have in their pockets. It is for what they have in their heads. Why did he go down in that alley?"

"Don! You act as though you thought——"

She stopped. She was shocked at the idea that I should think she knew more than she was willing to admit; but whether the shock was from pain that I should suspect or pain that I should have guessed, was something I could not tell. Yet the one thing I did believe was that Sara La Verge honestly, truly, almost nobly, loved Keith. Which made it extremely difficult for me to guess at what I should think, because I also believed that she was keeping something back.

I said this:

"Miss La Verge, whatever else you may believe it is not that Keith was casually murdered by some footpad. He was the one man in this city that could go any place and be safe. Girls worn out and dying would send for him when they needed a priest, and he would go down into a barrel-house any time of the night to sew up the cracked head of a stew-bum. Now tell me, who do you know of that hated him?"

She was fearful and half-bent backward as if undecided whether to be angry or to drop to her knees. Her dark eyes glowed with startled doubt; and she said slowly—

"Before God, Don, I don't——"

I snapped a thumb and forefinger and broke off the sentence; then said:

"I haven't asked for what you don't know. Of course you don't know who did it. Also it is a hideous thing to mention anybody's name when murder has been done. But if you *had* to accuse somebody, who would it be?"

With sudden resolution and something like defiance, yet with a question's intonation, she said—

"You know Steck Jordan, Don?"

Vaguely, as I knew a hundred people about town with whom I had never had a word, I knew of him. And of course I remembered at once that it was said Sara La Verge had looked with favor on him, as almost all women did.

He was a big, handsome fellow, a wonder with women, suave, quite young too, with manners enough to have served a duke or a headwaiter. This Steck Jordan was a high-class sport; and by that I mean a rounder who in some way managed to use up a lot of money. He was one of a common enough type in those gay, spendthrift days, a handsome sort of fellow who carried himself with a swagger flourish, played the races, bucked big faro-banks, and in a few months had established himself among the upper-class sports.

I knew that Keith had disliked him. For one thing Keith had the soul of a gentleman no matter through what dark streets he had left footprints; and this Steck Jordan was one of those enigmatic personalities that instinctively antagonize such people as Keith. Besides, it had been said that Sara La Verge had not looked with disfavor on the big, handsome, polished, buoyant fellow.

"Well?" I demanded.

She was staring at me. Her body was in that half-relaxed weakness of attitude that comes when tense muscles will not stay tense any longer but from sheer fatigue of strain let go; and she moistened her lips repeatedly as if preparing to say something that would not come out.

"Don?"

I waited.

"Don, I— Don, you will never, never, *never* let anybody know I told you? Please, you won't?"

I don't like to be tied up with promises to anybody. I keep my promises. All I said was—

"Go on."

"I—I have been afraid, for I don't know how long, that Keith would kill *him!*"

I nodded expectantly. She paused, thinking I ought to be surprized by that. Perhaps I was; but I wanted more.

"Steck Jordan— Keith—oh, the poor, foolish boy!—Keith was *jealous.* Jealous, Don, of—of a man I hate!"

She said it furiously, with the poisoned tone that is never heard except in women's voices; and it comes with quavering tenseness from between hard-set teeth.

"Why?" I said abruptly.

"He's no good, Don. He is a—a— I can't tell you!"

"Why?"

"Because I—honestly, I am afraid!"

"Why?"

"He would do something terrible!"

I was unimpressed. I had glanced at Mr. Steck Jordan from a distance, and he did not at all appear to me as a man to inspire much fear in anybody. True, he was a big, muscular fellow; and I had no doubt that he was a scoundrel clear down to his heart's core because most men are when so self-conscious of their physical charms.

I hammered away with the questionnaire and she answered:

"Because he would do anything, anything. Don't you understand? He would *kill* me."

Coldly, and not because I believed it so much as because I wanted to shock her into saying something intelligible:

"I see. He and Keith were rivals, and the survivor may claim you? Is that it?"

She gasped two or three times as if trying to come out from under a blow; and after a moment's glaring fierceness as when a flame leaps up and vanishes she said weakly—

"I thought—you were—a—a friend."

"What you need, what you have needed all your life," I told her, "is a friend who doesn't love you. And I do not. Now tell me why you were afraid Keith might kill him."

"Don, I—hate him. I have for years. But Keith—I told Keith about it."

"I see. You used to know Steck Jordan a long time ago?"

She nodded watchfully.

It was not luck that made me as the question, for I knew something of the Steck Jordan type; and I said—

"What was his name then?"

"Don!"

She appeared frightened. I did not understand. I could not guess. She was not the sort of woman at all to have anything like hysterics. Her poise was always good. Neither before nor since did I ever see her anywhere so near a breakdown, but that day had been a hard one and her nerves were frazzled. Besides, I was hitting a good deal harder than I knew.

"How much did Keith know?"

Sorrowfully she said:

"Everything, Don. But he didn't believe me because—well, because."

She broke off as if "because" had an intelligible meaning.

Sara La Verge said afterward to me that there was no one whom she trusted so much nor any one of whom she was so much afraid as myself; and whether it was fear or trust that made her talk a little more plainly I do not know; but she said:

"Steck Jordan did not do it, Don. He owed Keith a lot of money. Gambling-debt. He didn't have the money. I didn't have it for him this time, and Keith said he had to pay it or get out of town. You know, Don, how Keith was.

"When I heard Keith was dead Steck Jordan was the first person I thought of; and, Don, I telephoned and telephoned until I found out absolutely that all afternoon he was at the Palace."

"Naturally."

"Why do you say, 'Naturally'?"

"It is the very place I would have been all afternoon, too, if I had hired somebody to do a job of murder for me. At the Palace bar, in plain view of everybody—all afternoon."

"Don!"

She almost screamed. Something made her not want to believe that Steck Jordan, whom she hated—so she said—had killed Keith, whom she loved.

Such convolution of emotion was not within reach of my understanding. She had suspected Steck Jordan, but eagerly seized on an almost perfectly transparent alibi, for Steck Jordan was not a barroom loafer, not even a loafer in costly barrooms, and the man who solicitously keeps in sight all of the afternoon on which an enemy is murdered is to be regarded dubiously.

And why should this Steck Jordan have appealed to her for funds to pay a gambling-debt to Keith Keble?

I asked just that; and she staggered toward me with arms out and downward as if supplicating mercy; and with low, broken tones she gasped—

"Don, Don, he is my—my—oh, my brother!"

I shook my head slightly and made no other movement, but looked at her and waited. It was not that I didn't believe her, but I did not want her to think that I believed her.

"He is, Don. He is. Not my brother, but a half-brother. It is just the same. And Keith wouldn't believe it! Oh—it was the only real quarrel we ever had. He wouldn't believe me!"

She put her hands tremblingly to her face. She was shivering.

"Why not prove it?" I asked.

"Prove it?" she repeated falteringly, not understanding; then with quiet dejection answered:

"I should have, Don. I should have. But—you guessed it. I don't know how. But you guessed that his name is not Steck Jordan. But I would have had to tell his real name, and where we lived, and then Keith would have found out. I couldn't, I just couldn't, bear to have him find out."

"What?"

She looked at me with studious hopelessness, as if reluctant to yield but too worn out to resist my insistent, cold questioning. Besides, I was not Keith Keble and she did not want me to love her. She could tell me what she had with perhaps foolish stubbornness refused to tell him. Anyway she told me. Her tone was flat, unstressed, without accents.

"Don, he was accused of murdering a girl. I—my mother and I—we didn't know—Don, I am afraid he *was* guilty. But he, he broke out of jail during the trial. And he knows, Don, he knows that I won't give him up. I didn't dare tell Keith his real name and where we lived. Oh, Keith—Keith—Keith!"

She went into tears and fell down on a sofa. The tension had snapped, so she gave way and poured out her wo with the tragic sobbing of the broken woman.

I looked down at her and did not try to say anything. I could offer nothing but silence. The need of that Judgment Dawn to which I referred a little while ago is because God alone can understand the motives and impulses that swirl through hearts and brains, and force us to the things we do; and why Sara La Verge should have risked her intimacy with Keith rather than fully expose a rascally half-brother whom she hated was, as are most things about women, something beyond my comprehension.

I guessed this: This Sara La Verge did not hate her half-brother so much as she hated his way of life. Such distinctions in the hatred that women have are not unusual. But of course I knew nothing.

Her sobbing had stopped. She had become quiet and lay as if dead except for the slight movement of her shoulders as she breathed.

And as I looked down at her I thought again of Keith. I had always a weakness for him. Looking backward, it seemed to me that some prophetic sense had warned him life was short; and he wanted to get the most out of it, so wasted himself in intense work and intense dissipation. And his pockets had been emptied as he lay dead at the foot of a lodging-house's back stairs that ran down into the alley.

I was sure that whoever had killed him meant to kill *him*, and had not struck just to plunder a dead man's clothes; but there wasn't a hole in San Francisco where Dr. Keble was not known and respected. He was not like other doctors who are interested in rich patients rather than easement of pain; and who with their bedside flourish of owlish optimism are in business just as much as plumbers. I never knew a man to be so nearly loved by almost everybody.

When Sara at last sat up with a wet handkerchief pressed against her mouth, her eyes red-rimmed, swollen, and her cheeks tear-washed, her body wilted as a broken poppy-flower, she looked toward me with mute weary supplication; and again she met coldly merciless questions.

"How much did Steck Jordan owe to Keith?"

She sighed, looked away indifferently and answered without interest—

"Twenty-two thousand dollars."

I waited just a moment before speaking, then—

"Twenty-two what?"

Wearily, without looking toward me, she replied:

"Keith caught him cheating and made him play fair, ran him in debt like that, then told him to pay up or get out of town. Keith wanted to make him leave town. My brother came to me, but——"

She gestured with empty hands upturned.

"And of course," I said, "Steck Jordan gave an I. O. U. for that amount."

"Of course," she answered indifferently, her gaze far away.

I put thumb and finger to my long nose and pulled it reflectively; then, and it was not so wild a guess as it may appear though I knew nothing more than I had learned within the past hour, I said—

"And in this case of some months, or maybe it was years ago, when your brother—I mean half-brother—was accused of the crime you mentioned, did it by any chance happen that two other men, perhaps two brothers, two half animal-like fellows——"

She sprang up and faced me with arms rigidly at her side, and she was wordless with a kind of fright until after two or three efforts she whispered—

"You—Don, you *know!*"

"Who were they?"

"Two muskrat trappers that lived in a shanty down in a swamp by the lake—this was in Indiana. They found the girl's body. She had been drowned. There was a mark on her head. They had seen her in a canoe with a man and they swore that the man was not—not my brother. It was thought she had been killed before she was put in the water. Those men found her. But, Don, tell me, *tell* me how did you know that!"

"I didn't," I told her.

"Oh don't, don't, please don't lie to me."

And I said coldly, "I never lie."

Sara La Verge stood rigidly awkward and stared at my face. Her black hair fell in loosened coils and wisps about her head and cheeks, and the wide, staring eyes, with lips parted in astonishment and doubt, gave her a pathetically tragic aspect.

She asked in dazed, mechanical insistence—

"How did you know that?"

"Tomorrow I will tell you. But now I shall take the child home."

MENTION of the child reanimated her body. It was as if new energy had been released that gave her strength; but she was almost hysteric, though trying hard to control herself, as she cried:

"I must tell you—I've sworn never to tell—but, Don, I *will* tell you. It hasn't been wrong for the baby to come. Listen. You must listen. I— Oh, I—I——"

"No," I told her, and she understood that I meant it.

I said that I had no time to listen, for there was much to be done yet that night. Tomorrow she could tell me everything she wanted me to know. I said for her to get the child ready to go with me and I would see that she got home safely, and no one would be the wiser.

She hesitated, half-determined to say what she had to say, but at last, in little more than a mutter to herself, said—

"I mustn't ever tell."

She went into her bedroom and took off as much as she could of the marks of the tears, fixed her hair, changed some ribbons and pins, and appeared almost a different woman; but she was not, and I could see that her emotions were still poignantly near the surface.

She went to Kate and got her into the little velvet hat and coat with big buttons, and brought her into the room where I was.

Ah Quong, with arms together and hands in sleeves, his long iron-gray queue coiled like a serpent on his shaven head, followed, and, half-bending over the little fairy-like person seemed like some jinnee, some slave of the lamp, listening to hear whatever wish she had. Without raising his head he lifted his eyes and stared scrutinizingly at me as if to make sure what manner of fellow I was to take away the Pearl of Heaven.

Sara La Verge dropped on her knees and convulsively hugged the pretty child to her, and talked rapidly, trying to pretend to be gay. Her voice was unreal. She was making a strong effort to hide what she felt.

The child noticed. The wide, dark-brown eyes, with a yellowish, golden light playing through them, noticed everything; and she put a soft hand half-timidly against Sara's cheek and asked with a world of sympathy—

"W'at is matter, Love'y 'Ady?"

Sara turned her face away, but I saw the pain on it; and in a moment the pain was so much for her that she cried as she stood up and faced me:

"Oh I have been a fool—a fool—a fool! I should have kept her. I should not have told you. You can't have her. No! I won't give her up, ever! She is not——"

She was nearly out of her head; or perhaps she was entirely out of it. It sounded so. There is no knowing what she would have said and done had not the child, frightened by such fierceness, begun to cry.

That brought Sara back to something like sanity. She dropped by the child again, kissing her over and over, begging her not to cry, and never, never, never to forget the Lovely Lady; and though the little Katherine stopped her tears she was not quite reassured. She did not want to come with me, but asked over and over with the insistence of childhood, which is impervious to any explanation, where her "Uncle Keet" was and why didn't he come?

I picked her up. She was brave but frightened, and buried her face against my shoulder, crying softly.

As I went from the door I looked back. Sara was crouched on the floor with hands half-lifted in an attitude of abject prayer; and Ah Quong was stooping to her, like the jinnee that he was.

Then I closed the door.

I took the child to her own front yard, watched her run across the lawn and on to the porch, saw the door open; then I vanished into the shadows, for I could not have been known to figure in the return of the little girl without involving Sara La Verge, which was exactly what she had confided in me to avoid.

I did not suppose that she even knew, and could not imagine that she would have cared, how very much already the Carrolls disapproved of her; the blue-eyed Mrs. Carroll, Jr., especially being distressed at her brother's infatuation for a woman of the town.

If Mrs. Carroll had found out where Kate had been, and been not only once but many times, and that Sara La Verge was the "Love'y Lady" the child talked about—a lovely lady that was supposed to be a childish fancy, like the invisible companion that children often create for themselves—I am sure that she would never have recovered from the shock.

Kate Keble Carroll had gone through an expensive boarding-school in the East. She was a beautiful young woman, quite aristocratic in manner; kind-hearted enough, but believed in everybody keeping in the proper place, sphere and caste; and she believed Sara La Verge the very worst sort of woman on earth, largely because Keith, against all prayers and pleas, had been devoted to her.

III

ABOUT an hour after I had watched little Kate Keble through the door of her home I went down a short flight of stairs leading from an alley in under a saloon; and I battered on a heavy door, above which hung a large wooden boot that at one time had been painted with red and yellow by way of attracting the denizens of the neighborhood to the shoemaker's shop of the Zimmerman brothers.

I knew something of these brothers, though most of what I knew had been learned in the last few minutes. They had been in the city about two years, and had moved into the deserted shop under the saloon and set up as shoe-repairers, largely, it seemed, because they got shop, meager equipment and rent for practically nothing; for, it was said, they were misers.

They were both cut from the same block and had a mutual avarice that caused them to live together in a sort of pinched poverty; but, so it was said in the way of saloon gossip, they divided everything equally, even to the loaf of bread and dab of butter; and each guarded his possessions from the other as from a stranger with thief written on his face. They were misers to what is called the *n*th degree. It was said that when they sat at the bare board table there was a line drawn across the center and each kept his own food on his side of the line. Whenever a bill was paid the money was divided equally on the spot. Whether they got pleasure out of this arrangement or whether it was for fear of being cheated each by the other, I do not know. In fact I do not know if they actually did as the Tenderloin jeeringly said; but they were misers.

A light was burning inside, but a flap of leather was over the little hole in the door that was used as a window, or perhaps a peephole. It was scarcely larger than a peephole. It was rather late for customers perhaps; but I had some business there.

A husky, harsh voice answered my repeated rappings and wanted to know who was there; and I told.

"What you want?"

"What do you suppose I want?"

I was pretty well known by name and sight to most of the people in that neighborhood, and though I was a quiet young man who then as now would do anything reasonable to keep away from trouble, yet peaceable people—and misers are notoriously peaceable—seemed to have an exaggerated eagerness not to offend me.

After a pause in which there was a vague muttering and some faint stirring about, the door opened slightly, and a thin, hungry, badly featured face was outlined between me and the oil lamp held in the hand of some one standing close behind.

"Open it," I said. "I am coming in."

The door reluctantly widened, and I went in, closing it sharply behind me.

The shop was a small space with a low ceiling, two backless chairs that had sagging canvas seats, a low bench studded with the handles of various knives, with scraps and slabs of leather in sight; and the place was filled with the acrid smell of cowhide and tarred thread. Some magazine covers in years gone by had been nailed in one or two places on the dirty walls. It was a dirty little dump, with a door leading off into another hole where the two animals took their sleep.

These Zimmermans were rather small men, thin-featured with dangerously hungry faces and suspicious, watchful eyes. They were brothers all right, both in features and dirty dress; and they stared at me with the half-alarmed doubt of animals not quite tamed. The worst they feared happened with promptness.

"Hands up!"

As I said it a gun came into each of my hands.

There was a snarling, surprized and angry sound, very abrupt and quickly over. Their hands went up, striking the ceiling. And they shivered. I mean shivered. Their furtive eyes opened up with fear. Their loosened jaws quivered.

"Face the wall!"

They hesitated, casting sidelong glances toward each other; then stumblingly they turned their backs to me, and one of them made a slight moaning sound until I told him to stop it.

I went through their pockets and took out an assortment of odds and ends, a piece of shoemaker's wax, the cap from a glue-bottle, string, some wooden pegs—nothing of value to anybody, and no money at all.

"So be it," I said to myself as I saw luck had not dumped what I wanted into my hands; and then as I eyed their backs I realized that, if these brothers were excessively distrustful of each other and divided everything between them, they would not try in such small quarters to conceal their stuff each from the other, but would surely keep it on their persons—somewhere.

Thereupon I jerked the shirt-tail from the the trousers of one of them, and, thrusting a hand against his waist, detected a money-belt.

On the instant he whirled, crazy, desperate, touched into action. The fellow seemed to feel that he was about to lose what was of more value than life, so there was no reason for him to care what else happened. He came near losing that precious life of his too. I drove the muzzle of the gun up under his jaw with force enough to knock him off his feet and backward across the bench on which he partly tripped; and he fell on the back of his head.

As it was he was knocked only half-unconscious, dazed for a moment, and I put a foot on his chest with no gentle pressure, at the same time keeping an eye on the other fellow, who, not knowing just what had galvanized his brother into mad action, looked around in terror. He looked straight into a muzzle that must have seemed to yawn engulfingly; then jerked his face back to the wall.

I slipped my foot a little closer to the fellow's throat and gave him to understand that if he wanted to have any further use of his neck it would be unwise to make any movement or noise.

Then, stooping over, but with one eye on the back of the other brother's head, I loosened the money-belt and shook out its pockets one by one. Every time that the fellow got five dollars in change he must have gone to a bartender or bank and traded it for a gold-piece. The belt was heavy with gold. And I looked at each gold-piece, dropping the money to the floor, until I found what I had hoped rather than expected to find—although I knew that I would find something or have to take myself out of town for some weeks. But there was a gold-piece of the ten-dollar size with one side made smooth; and on this was engraved—

Keep me and you will always have money.

It had been Keith Keble's pocket-piece.

There was no need to look further.

These shoemakers had fatally overplayed their hand when they heard everybody saying Keith had had the baby with him and that kidnapers must have murdered him and stolen her. They had yielded to the temptation of trying to strengthen their alibis by swearing they had seen the baby in his arms in the alley that afternoon, which was so deliberately and emphatically false that, since I could not very well explain to anybody how I knew it was false, I was practically forced to investigate.

I said to the fellow who was standing to the wall—

"Look at me."

He turned.

"Which of these is the mallet you killed Dr. Keble with?"

He flinched as if he had been jabbed with a knife's point.

THERE is little need to go into the details of what followed. At first they were inclined to be sullenly silent; but there are various ways of jarring a confession out of people; and in less than five minutes they were whimpering a tale, confessional enough for all the lies it held. They were impressed because they couldn't imagine how I knew, and so believed that I knew more than I did; and also they were encouraged a little because I said I wouldn't take their gold from them if they told me the truth. I did not add that some shyster lawyer would do that for them.

Confessions are never to be greatly depended on, though usually they have some truth in them; and the Zimmermans, I believed, omitted certain facts rather than lied. They said that they had sent word to Dr. Keble on Saturday that if he would come to their shop on Sunday afternoon—

but he must let no one know about it—they would tell him something of importance.

"What?"

"Oh, 'bout some people."

"Who?"

" 'Bout— Oh, we didn't know nothin'. Jus' made him think so."

He came and sat down on one of their backless chairs, and while Jan Zimmerman was talking to him Peter Zimmerman hit him with a mallet.

They took everything he had, and watchfully carried the body out and laid it at the back entrance of a rooming-house about twenty yards up the alley.

I was not able to decide whether the brothers were plain half-witted fools or desperate brutes unthinkingly to take such a risk as that of carrying a murdered body in daylight down an alley where any moment any number of people might pop out. But sometimes audacity is the very best alibi that a criminal can have. It would have been so in their case if they had not had so much human nature in them that they must need elaborate on a perfectly good and safe alibi.

There was not much time to waste over this puzzle. I said—

"Who got you to kill him?"

They looked at me from under their brows and pretended more dullness than their sharp eyes admitted. One of them shook his head stubbornly and said—

"Nobody."

"Where are the papers and letters you took from him?"

"Burned 'em," said Jan.

"Where?"

"In a stove."

He motioned vaguely toward the door that opened into the hole where they slept.

I said this and said it emphatically:

"You see that I *knew* you killed Dr. Keble. I *know* also that somebody got you to do it."

They moved a little uneasily.

"I know that it was one of two men. It was either Frank Koplan or Steck Jordan—*which?*"

That jarred them. They made little jerking movements and squirmed around until their eyes met craftily. They didn't know quite what to say; but Jan Zimmerman, who seemed to think that he had the most brains, said:

"You guessed it, mister. The Koplin feller, he got us to do it."

I did not then tell them that to the best of my knowledge there was nobody in the city or elsewhere by the name of Frank Koplan.

Then Jan tied Peter's hands behind him, after which I tied Jan's, and out and up I marched them, into the alley and through the back door of the saloon and into the barroom.

It was around twelve o'clock, and some barflies and a few office-clerk rounders loitered there, all of them more or less soggy with steam beer and whisky made of tea-leaves, red pepper and raw alcohol.

They looked around with idle, nosy stares; and though there was no gun in sight the sulking manner and tied hands of the Zimmermans excited wonder.

I told the bartender to call up the police and keep a watch on these men, for they had confessed to the murder of Keith Keble.

This made a commotion, with everybody crowding around to gape at the shoemakers; and they were cursed. The bartender was a heavy, flat-footed fellow, with crinkled hair, whom nothing could excite.

"A' right, Everhard," he growled.

He telephoned the police with that air of gruff superiority which all bartenders feel—or did before they became extinct—over the police. Then from a drawer he drew a revolver built on lines evidently intended to scare the beholder with size rather than noise.

When the police arrived I had been gone for several minutes, slipping out unnoticed while all eyes were turned staringly on the Zimmermans' faces. I knew that the bartender would tell the police who I was, and that they would hold the prisoners on the strength of my say-so. I'm not given to making hysterical accusations.

But I could not claim and I would not accept the reward, so there had been no need for me to stand about and securely establish myself as the captor. I did not want it ever to be thought that my hands had been colored with blood-money. And while it might have been all right to take the reward for such creatures as the Zimmermans, yet many if not indeed most of my friends are and always have been from among crooks; and if I began making money by selling pelts no man among them could be sure when I might tell what I knew of him and collect fifty dollars.

I went back to the shoemakers' shop and went through it quickly, looking for the ashes of burned papers and especially for papers that may not have been burned. But I found only ashes, and of them I could make out nothing.

IV

I HAVE a cautious nature, so I always evade as many risks as I can. That is why I took the precaution of securing quiet from the servant in pajamas with the forbidding face that answered the bell. I put a gun up close enough to change the expression on his forbidding countenance; and before he had time to think of what was going on I had thrust a pear gag between his jaws, clapped handcuffs on to his wrists, set him down in a chair and tied this feet to the chair's legs and left him shivering, in the belief if he so much as rattled his teeth he would have his heart weighted with lead.

Then I took off my mask and started for the room where I expected to find Mr. Steck Jordan. I had taken the precaution of coming when I knew the gentleman was not entertaining company.

I knew, in fact, a good deal more about him than the gentleman suspected. All that day, for instance, Mr. Steck Jordan had not succeeded in making a move that was not watched.

Personally, I had neither the time, inclination nor ability to follow any man undetected and find out where he went, whom he talked to, what he ate, drank, smoked, and a part of what he said. But all that day Mr. Steck Jordan had carried shadows that he could not escape.

Some day somebody may write the Book of the Shadow; and with appreciative insight reveal some of the subtleties and romance of that extremely difficult art. The shadow is a very valuable man in police affairs; the more so because not one man in a thousand, even among the experienced and trained officers, is worth a plugged nickel at the game.

This thing of following the vigilant crook, wary, suspicious, more full of tricks than a magician's trunk, and as keenly nervous as an animal, and keeping him ever in sight without letting him become aware that he is being watched, is one of if not *the* most difficult feats that detectives have to perform; but in crookland the tables are often turned and crooks are shadows.

It is amazing to most people, for instance, how well informed crooks are about people's habits, how familiar they are with the lay of the land; and crooks do not get this intimacy by use of a ouija board. At times they even stalk certain detectives, and with a success that has caused the police to wonder by what devil's art crooks have guessed what was on foot.

Two of my friends, clever, foxy, elusive fellows, who could have followed a man down a deserted beach without attracting his attention—professionally they were scouts for a group of confidence workers—had undertaken to keep Steck Jordan in their eyes for me. They were experts, as inconspicuous and ferret-eyed as ghosts.

And in that way I knew more about Mr. Steck Jordan than he imagained any man would ever learn of him; for, as I have said, I am very cautious by nature and though I sometimes make a pretty broad jump in the dark I never do so without some idea of whose toes I am going to land on. But even the best jumper will sometimes land on his own face.

From the shadows I had learned this:

Steck Jordan had shown pronounced symptoms of agitation on his way to the restaurant for breakfast just after opening up the newspaper where in billboarded headlines was told the story of the Zimmermans' capture and their confession that the crime had been inspired by one Frank Kaplin.

Mr. Jordan had breakfasted hastily on coffee, and in spite of the fact that no gentleman drinks brandy before eleven o'clock he had spiked the coffee heavily. Eggs and toast grew cold and remained untouched. He read all of the papers with a hasty eagerness and threw the discarded pages on the floor.

The important thing was this: After many repeated glances at his watch Mr. Jordan went to a telephone and called up a certain law office; then, still showing symptoms of agitation, he hurried off to the office of Thomas Platt Marks, sometimes known as the finest criminal lawyer in San Francisco.

I mean by that this: Thomas Platt Marks rarely lost a case in court. If he could not frighten off the prosecution's witnesses he was pretty sure to be able to persuade a juror or two of his client's innocence. Among the people who knew more than they would admit publicly it was considered as evidence of guilt for an accused man to engage Thomas Platt Marks.

There is some such criminal lawyer in every city, usually two or three of them. Always he is a brilliant fellow, a free spender, invariably quick-witted, usually a heavy drinker, a gambler too, erratic and supremely skilled in throwing monkey-wrenches into the machinery. Usually he dies in a private sanitarium from a joint attack of D. T.'s and drug poisoning, if not paresis.

Shortly after Mr. Steck Jordan had spent a full hour and a half in the office of Thomas Platt Marks a brilliant young junior lawyer from the office rushed off to the city jail and presented himself as the attorney for the Zimmerman brothers.

When I heard of this I said to myself as the old poets used to say to themselves—"Ergo, it follows as the night the day that there is something rotten in Denmark."

It is said that putting two and two together will always give you four; but you are just as likely to be presented with the more surprizing number of twenty-two—particularly if you let a criminal lawyer get in his fine work on the evidence.

I knew very well that it would require an unexpected and slightly forcible interview with so experienced and poised a man of the world as Steck Jordan in order to impress him with the fact that he would have to do his own fighting and that he could not hide behind the law-books of Thomas Platt Marks. And I intended to take from him the tribute of an eye for an eye.

So, having quietly, quickly and completely disposed of the servant, I walked on until I reached the so-called den where I knew Steck Jordan happened to be alone.

I opened the door quietly.

He was sitting in a big chair, a hand to his cheek and a cigar between the fingers of the hand; and without looking around he said—

"Who was it, Grey?"

"Mr. Donald Everhard."

Mr. Steck Jordan came up out of that chair as if the words had released a powerful spring in the seat, and he faced me in glowering astonishment.

He was a big man, a powerful man, handsome too I suppose; but as I do not like handsome men that was nothing to his credit; and he was not awkward even in the convulsive surprize. He glared at me with that intense, utter blankness of expression that comes over the face of a fellow when he feels an unsuspected trap-door giving way beneath his feet.

"May I ask," he demanded in a powerful, cultured voice with all the crushing weight of indignation, "what the —— you are doing here?"

"You may."

My voice is not cultured. It is not powerful. But I have been fortunate in that its intonation has always very successfully assisted the meaning of my words. Moreover, I am not and never was inclined to feel nervous just because somebody happened to glower at me and show anger.

Pause. A long pause. He was looking me over with intense appraisal; and I had the suspicion just then that I had not fully given this fellow credit for his ability. He was handsome, which had predisposed me to his prejudice. He had all manner of women hanging about his neck, which had contributed to a certain contempt for him.

Then, "Well, what is it?" he almost bellowed.

No doubt I looked inoffensive enough. In my younger days I was inclined to that thinness of figure that is not greatly respected by healthy, robust persons. My face, from much sitting up nights under the glare of gas-lights, was rather pale.

I wore a square-cut, double-breasted coat of cloth dark enough to suggest something ministerial. I had on no jewelry, nothing of the gambler's richness of dress; and I might have been taken for a young theological student by any one who did not know that young theological students are well-fed, jolly-cheeked, athletic, robust, merry boys who do not at all believe in the penitential austerities.

My reputation was not unknown to him. No matter how much he may have overlooked it in the past, that day my name with all the salient details associated with it had been brought home to him in every account he read of the Zimmermans' capture. I had a name as a "killer," which was a little unjust to one of my peaceable disposition; but the facts as rehashed in the papers had made me out as an extremely dangerous sort of person.

And as far as Steck Jordan was concerned those facts were true. I intended to kill him when I had got a confession out of him. Not shoot him down like the dog that he was; no. But to force a duel out of him, and after the stern justice of the Middle Ages settle the matter in a trial by ordeal rather than permit him to use the more modern method of trial by jury.

In spite of what he had read I must have appeared quite inoffensive. My hands were half-thrust into the side pockets of my coat, and I had politely tucked my soft felt hat under my arm. From my manner I am sure that he had no reason to feel that I was not a quiet and respectful person, perhaps even ready to be a little apologetic at breaking in upon his night hours. Certainly after the first flurry of surprize he appeared somewhat at ease, though still a little indignant.

"Well, what is it?" he repeated in the powerful tone of cultured exasperation; and at once I commented, silently of course, on the excellent poker-player that he must be.

With his overshadowing bulk, his strong personality, his direct eyes and forceful, cultured voice he should have been able to give any pair of deuces the dignity of a full house—before the showdown.

But bluffing is a great art, more deeply complex than any of the seven; and the bully has learned but one primary, almost rudimentary, phase of it.

There are not only times when a pair of deuces should be bet like a full house, but when the full house should be played like a pair of deuces; and the even more important times when the pair of deuces should be played like a full house that is nothing more than a bob-tailed flush. Subtle distinctions, these; but distinctions recognizable instantly by every man who has been drawn within the magic circle of the green cloth.

In spite of all the circumstantial evidence that I had against him I had, so to speak, nothing more than a bob-tailed flush—a bob-tailed straight flush perhaps, which however isn't worth any more than the other kind if it isn't filled; and one instant of aggressive firmness on his part would have left me in the awkward position of being invited to go to the —— with my suspicions while he trotted off to Thomas Platt Marks and got such a defense built up as would leave my circumstantial evidence worthless. A good crook and a worse criminal lawyer can turn even cold facts into a fog.

So I said this to Steck Jordan:

"Some days ago a certain friend came to me and said to me as he placed an envelop in my hand, 'I have a feeling that something may happen to me, and if my body is found in an alley or anything like that I want you to make use of the statement in this envelop.'

"And so," said I, drawing a manila envelop from an inside pocket, "I have come to ask you about this."

"Give it to me," said Mr. Steck Jordan, reaching out with an eagerness that did not completely harmonize with his good manners.

"Just a moment," I replied, holding up a forefinger in that cabalistic way with which a life-insurance agent stops your protests. "As I said, my friend had a premonition that something would happen to him, and it did—in an alley."

Mr. Steck Jordan made a low, vague noise with his throat, and, lowering his head slightly, watched me, not unlike a large prize bull wondering whether or not to charge.

I was jabbing close to his heart. He had good poise, but I thought that his face turned purplish before it went ashen, then filled again with hot blood; and I could see the muscles at the base of his jaw quivering.

"Confound your impudence!" he cried, and I thought how considerate he was even in his anger to say "confound" instead of what he really meant.

"Twenty-two thousand dollars," I said politely, extending my hand with the easy expectancy of one borrowing as many pennies from a friend.

"Twenty-two thousand devils!" said Mr. Steck Jordan, drawing himself up and squaring his shoulders with the resolution of a man refusing absolutely to be bulldozed into paying blackmail, especially as his pockets were empty.

I smiled at him. I felt no amusement at all; but I have heard it said that when in doubt smile as if you carried the world up your sleeve and the other fellow will do the most worrying. But if you overdo the smile, then the other fellow will glimpse the bluff and grin at you. But I must have smiled successfully, for, seeing that I had nothing more to say, he demanded:

"Just what do you mean? Twenty-two

thousand dollars! What *do* you mean?"

I lifted my eyebrows slightly and looked at him with a slight air of surprize. But every nerve was tense, and I had that dubious sensation that comes to the best of players when everything is shoved into the pot against a pat hand.

"Twenty-two thousand dollars," I said. "It isn't much to pay, when——"

I paused to let the vague inference sink in.

Vague as the inference was, I was hitting at him as hard as I could. I had to smash through his poise with the next hundred words or I would be likely to have his attorney, the clever Thomas Platt Marks, climbing over my back with long claws. A man, whatever his fine motives, who takes the law into his own hands must be prepared to pay for it with as much tears, sweat and weight of chains as the criminal; and I would be in a dangerously ridiculous position if I did not convince Steck Jordan that he had more to fear from me than to hope for from any insolence of attitude that he might maintain; for unless I got what amounted to a confession out of him my hands were tied.

"Twenty-two thousand dollars," I repeated, "isn't much to pay to the man who *made* the Zimmerman brothers accuse Frank Koplan of getting them to murder Keith Keble."

That was really all I had to say to him. He was staring at me as I said it, and his face became a sort of introspective blank as he caught the ambiguous words. In a second or two of study the expression changed to a startled realization that somehow I did actually know everything.

I added, "There is no such person as Koplan, or Kaplin either."

He stared with sullen mystification, undecided, not quite daring either to deny or to admit what I implied; and the very delay was a confession—just as much as an angry, blustering denial would have been.

But I did not want to alarm him. When you are coaxing a man to poke his head through a noose you must be gentle though firm, and lead him on without abrupt gestures or menacing words.

"You see," I said with a quiet air of intimacy, "my friend Keble was a person who was quite sensitive to what we may call psychic impressions. And what was more natural for a man of that kind to write out a statement, setting forth certain relations with another person and incorporating the sentence, 'If anything should happen to me my friends may be sure that my death was caused by——' "

I broke off and flipped the envelop significantly, against the palm of my left hand.

Still Steck Jordan was silent, frightened, but not quite convinced.

I went on with a manner of fairness, of impartial consideration:

"True, such a statement *proves* nothing. But it is very difficult to answer a dead man. The city is full of his friends. His relatives are big men, powerful figures in the community. And just to have his statement destroyed, what is a mere twenty-two thousand, or something even less— Pouf! What is that for——"

I again tapped my palm with the envelop.

A certain gleaming light came into his eyes. He seemed to see his way out; but he was still silent. Good poise, that fellow had. A careful brain. He was on the underside of middle age, too.

My manner was not friendly but rather advisory. I had not tried to suggest a friendliness, but in perfect frankness I was pointing out the various angles of the situation to him; and with the soft tap-tap-tap of the envelop on my hand I concluded thus:

"Such a statement, combined with the *full* confession of the shoemakers—State's evidence, you know—would be embarrassing. Just because they have helped you out before in that other little Indiana affair—what is ten or twelve thousand?"

That did jolt him.

I made a gesture as of giving the envelop into his hand.

The inference was clear. I wanted to pad my pockets.

The padding of pockets was something that Mr. Steck Jordan understood perfectly. He was no fool. He was more like a wolf. And he was a clever crook.

But he was a crook; and when a man is an out-and-out crook, a crook because of his innate character, there is always a vulnerable readiness on his part to suspect that other men too are rotten down in their hearts.

"Let me see that—ah—statement," he said cautiously, putting out a hand.

I smiled again. My lips are too thin for much real merriment to appear; and I did not feel it. I was not supposed to feel it. But he understood precisely what I intended to convey. This business of smiling so much was another of the many youthful gaucheries that I outgrew as I increased my years and knowledge.

With decision he said:

"I'll give you five thousand for that. It is pure poppycock, all you say. But it *would* be embarrassing. I'll pay five thousand, just to keep my name out of it, though I have nothing to fear—not a thing, sir!"

"Certainly not. Nothing to fear at all," I answered. "But I won't take a cent less than ten thousand. You owed Keble twenty-two. That will still leave you twelve thousand you ought to have paid Keble with which to help the Zimmermans in their trial. What do you say, a check to me and this to you?"

"A check?" he asked with the eager though repressed hopefulness of a man who by the instinctive workings of his mind foresees the ease with which the incriminating statement may be destroyed, the Zimmermans bolstered to firmness, payment on the check stopped, and myself invited to whistle through my hat for the money.

"Yes. Why not?"

"Oh, certainly. It is perfectly all right. Yes indeed," he said.

All of the cultured notes had come into his voice, and he oozed amiability. He smiled, and, drawing a check-book from his pocket, bent over the table and hastily filled it in.

Toweringly he turned and with a broad, friendly smile gave it to me as his fingers closed on the envelop, which he tore open with impulsive abruptness. He unfolded the paper within, looked at it, changed color, opened his mouth, turned the paper over, stared at it stupidly for an instant, then angrily faced me.

But, holding the check between the thumb and finger of my two hands, I was saying as I read it:

"For Heaven's sake, man, what has happened! I wanted money, and here is written, '*I, Steck Jordan, hereby confess that I got Jan and Peter Zimmerman to kill Dr. Keble——*' "

"What!" he roared, frightened and forgetting the utterly blank paper he had taken from the envelop.

"Yes," I answered sharply. "Here, read for yourself. Take it—see—read here!"

I gave the check to him, and he held it tensely between his hands as he bent his head to it, glaring, dumfounded, for stare as he might he could make out nothing but an order on his bank for ten thousand dollars—which incidentally he did not have in the bank.

"Why—why—" he said unsteadily, still scanning the check. "You must be crazy. I haven't——"

At that moment he looked up and into the muzzle of a revolver that I had taken from a shoulder holster, and it lay almost carelessly in my palm, but with the cold black eye of the muzzle on his face.

I answered—

"To all intents and purposes, and as far as I am concerned, that check is a full and authentic confession."

He began with an astounded air—

"Why, in court——"

"Court? It will never get near a court. You and Thomas Platt Marks could make out an angel, though he appeared on the stand in feathers, halo and all, to be a wilful, malicious perjurer."

He gasped inaudibly with that movement of the mouth that people make when determined to speak, but the words will not come.

Big, handsome, smooth of manner, a little too smooth for the needs of honesty, he stood with something of the expression of a surprized owl and tried to guess what I was up to. There was nothing, or at least very little, that was stupid about him, except in so far as there is a subtle stupidity that peeks out from behind the face of every man who thinks himself so much more clever than his fellows that he does not need to be honest; and he was handsome, both in figure and face.

I resented that handsomeness, the snug fit and luxuriously elegant lines of his clothes, the polish and poise of his manners. With the self-consciousness of youth I knew that I was thin and awkward; and I felt a sort of injustice that he should stand brazen and unhumbled in the midst of admitted guilt.

Perhaps the hardest thing in the world is to be honest, especially with oneself; and I would not have admitted it then, but in looking backward I can tolerantly admit that when I thought I was being most rigorously conscientious and severe I was only living up to a swashbuckler's pride. But I must insist, as I have often done, that fear as fear never touched me; and I have wondered if indeed it is possible for any but cowards to be brave men. The fellow whose knees tremble, whose lips quiver, whose heart beats a panicky alarm, yet goes right on through with it though every nerve is pulling like ropes in a giant's hands to turn him back—that fellow is brave.

I looked at Mr. Steck Jordan and took my time in saying anything; then from a holster on my hip drew a second revolver, a mate to the first, and I had bought the pair of them from Dan McFarland—they were good guns—and by the muzzle I laid it on the table, butt toward him.

I watched his face. His eyes followed it. He looked up at me inquiringly, but seemed half to guess what was coming. A look of pained uneasiness settled in his eyes.

"I think you have guessed it," I said to him.

He made a pretense of friendliness, cleverly ignoring the danger. With artfully flattering modesty he said:

"I've heard you were the best shot in San Francisco. I know nothing of guns myself."

"Why just San Francisco?" I asked.

"Eh? I say, I've heard—on the level—some say there wasn't a better shot any place."

"Perhaps that is true. I'm inclined to believe it myself. But in a locked room with the lights out there is no difference between a poor shot and a good one."

He took a step backward, eyes staring.

"I don't know what you mean," he lied.

"I'll make myself clear when the lights are out. There is no reason why I should, but I want to give you an even chance. Just to keep it from being too much like murder."

"You—you must be joking?" he asked intensely, trying to bring out a smile with muscles that were almost frozen.

I asked for the keys to the doors. He said there were none.

Both of the doors opened inward; so I told him to push the heavy chair in which he had been sitting against one and to roll the table against the other. Even so slight a barricade would prevent his making any sudden dash from the room when the lights were out.

He did not want to do it. To make the barricade seemed like agreeing to the hazard, and he was afraid, thoroughly afraid. Without refusing he stood still and looked from the chair to the table, then at me. He eyed me watchfully, and he seemed to think that it was safer to refuse than to do as instructed.

"But, Mr. Everhard, listen. Tomorrow—I'll give you any amount. I've got a deal on that'll bring me in twenty-five thousand. I'll split it with you.

"This won't help you any—to shoot me. I didn't have anything to do with the murder of Keble. I was at the Palace all that afternoon——"

I pushed the table with the revolver on it against a door but kept an eye on him. I didn't want him dashing out of the other door. Then I turned to the chair and began to pull it to the other door.

"Wait—wait a minute!"

He raised a hand.

"Let's talk this over. I want to know just what——"

"I am going to turn the lights out and shoot at you. There is a gun over there on the table. You can use it or not, just as you please."

He looked across at it, turned, and, watching me from across his shoulder, went across the room to the table; but he did not touch the gun.

It was not a large room and seemed even smaller because the furniture was of the heavy, bulky kind. There was another big chair, and a low, flat, round table with a cabinet body of the sort used to store smoker's materials. The apartment was on the third floor, and the two windows of this room opened on to the street. The blinds were not drawn.

With the chair in place against the door I moved toward the light button.

"People will hear shots—*wait!*"

Surely people would hear; but I did not expect the firing would last for any length of time. One, or two shots at the most, rapidly given, and I expected to be gone from the room.

I pointed to the gun lying before him on the table and said:

"If you want that you had better get it now. Being unarmed won't help *you*—not a bit more than it helped Keith Keble."

With that I snapped out the light.

Then I quickly, quietly stepped three or four paces along the wall and waited, after having made a deliberate noise in the hope of getting Steck Jordan to shoot toward me.

The scoundrel would have had no more than he deserved if I had knocked him over the head in a workmanly fashion and left him to be found by whoever chanced that way; but I wanted to do it as I thought best for my own peace of mind.

I waited. He made no sound. I had not expected such patience from him. Most men would have betrayed themselves in some way.

I listened closely. There was not a sound, not even that of breathing. I wondered what he could be up to. I was sure that he was not the sort of coward to huddle himself down in trembling silence on the floor and wait, shiveringly wait, for whatever might happen. I began to be impatiently curious.

THERE is no way of judging time in darkness where a few minutes of strain have the weariness of hours in them. And though my patience in the waiting game is not easily raveled, I was wondering just what would be the best move to make when *snap-snap-snap-snap*, and the next instant there was the sound of a gun falling on the floor in about the middle of the room; and Steck Jordan cried—

"An empty gun—I might've known you'd do that!"

I don't think I was ever more amazed in my life, but it took less to amaze me then than it does now.

I had, of course, looked at the gun's chambers before putting it into the hip holster. The gun I always had about me was carried in the shoulder holster; and though I could use a gun almost equally well with either hand, I seldom, unless about some definite business, carried but one; and the other lay in an unlocked drawer of my dresser in my room.

The first thing that went through my head was that somebody had replaced my shells with others in which the detonating caps were "dead." Such tricks are not usual, but are not unknown; and the shells were evidently dead.

I felt a preposterous chagrin that I should have turned out the lights to fight a duel with an unarmed man; but all in all the incident was worth its lesson, for I never afterward went out of my way to treat scoundrels with anything like gallantry.

I said, "Wait, let me take a look at that gun," and, fumbling along the wall, I groped for the light button, and with difficulty located it.

When the light came on Steck Jordan was standing where I had last seen him. It did not appear that he had moved; and he stood with an air of half-expectant resignation, if there is such an air. Anyway as he stood with hands in pocket, his big body slouching a little, and eyed me watchfully, I thought he seemed rather hopeful about something while trying to appear dejected.

I looked along the floor and saw the revolver. I went to it, and, tucking the gun I held under my arm, I stooped to the floor. Then—

A gun roared and a bullet hit my back.

But not until I actually saw the gun in Steck Jordan's hand did I realize what had happened, and that I had been tricked—tricked by as clever and cool a play as any man could have made.

He had had his own gun in his pocket all of the time, but had seen no reason to let me know that; and if I had not kept such close watch on him when he pretended his reluctance to approach the revolver I had put on the table he would have shot me then.

If he believed many of the things he had heard about me he thought I was just about as deadly a marksman as anybody that he was ever likely to meet; and, not being anything like a fool, he had known in the dark that I was waiting for some noise to disclose his position; so he had kept quiet and noiselessly removed the shells from the revolver.

He knew too that I was stupidly chivalrous, else I would never have forced the duel on him, supplying a weapon as good as my own; so, snapping the trigger, he had the pretense that the gun I gave him was unloaded—then threw it away, for he knew that such a chivalrous young fool as myself could not fail to turn on the light and stoop to pick up the discarded gun.

As I bent down the bullet struck me in the right shoulder, breaking the collar-bone, making that arm useless; and the force of the blow, hitting when I was stooped, pitched me forward as if the top of my head had been blown out.

The gun I had tucked under my elbow fell, so that for about four or five seconds I was unarmed.

Steck Jordan saw however that I was still alive, very much alive, and as most men do when frantically hurrying, he shot as fast as he could pull the trigger and plowed up the floor all about me; and I, on the floor, grabbing what I thought was my own revolver picked up the emptied one and snapped it twice at him before I threw it down and reached for the other.

A broken collar-bone is just a little less serious than a broken thumb, not quite so painful perhaps, but may slow a man down a little more. By the time I had got the loaded gun and turned, Steck Jordan had jerked the table aside and was going through the door.

I don't think I ever wished any harder for a bullet to go home; but I missed him clear. He was gone.

I could hear his heavy steps thumping down the hall. And the noise of the shooting had brought people astir. So I knew that I had to be up and going too.

I did what many a man has done in much the same sort of fix. I put my hat into my pocket, rumpled my hair, and, rushing into the hall, cried, "Stop the thief!" as I pointed ahead and hurried fast as I could with an arm dangling.

Steck Jordan, running with the heavy-footed noise of an elephant breaking through a jungle, had given the impression of being the fugitive, so that even those who possibly caught sight of him and recognized him, believed on the instant that he was guilty of something and fleeing.

As soon as I got to the street I made for the shadows, got to an alley, and was seen no more in that neighborhood that night.

AS MAY be expected, I kept that fiasco to myself; but I was surprized that Steck Jordan also kept it to himself, and himself out of sight.

In running down the stairs he had fled from more than my bullets; he had run from the charge of murdering Keith Keble; and, not knowing how much was known, fearing the worst, he went into hiding and left everybody wondering about the mystery. For it was a mystery that he should have run, as if guilty, from his own rooms after they had been—according to the servant—entered by a masked robber; and all the shooting that had gone on was inexplicable because no one was dead. Nothing but the marks on the floor and a revolver with empty and unfired chambers was found.

In a way I had a slight sense of relief that Steck Jordan had not run in under a policeman's coat tail and charged me with robbery; but it was evident that he did not have the audacity to face it out.

The next day a good doctor friend of mine put some wrappings on my shoulder, binding it up as if I were about to be done into a mummy, and assured me that I had nothing that would give more trouble than some inconvenience for a week or two. Also he pretended to believe me when I said how could I tell who had fired the shot, for didn't he see that it had come from behind?

I didn't want stares from the curious or questions from my friends, so I stayed in my room for the next two or three days, reading and looking at nothing from the window.

About dark one evening I heard the shrill squawking of newsboys. They were scampering down the street, waving papers and yelling. I listened. Their voices came to me with long-drawn, strident howls that made it hard to understand what they were calling:

"Ex-truh! Stole again! Extruh! Kid nabbed—Carroll kid nabbed again! Ex-truh!"

I sent my Chinese boy down for a paper, and he came back with Dan McFarland.

"Fell down-stairs and sprained your shoulder, I see," said McFarland with unsmiling humor as he placed himself in a chair and tilted back.

He looked at me with eyes adroop, and waited.

I did not say anything. I knew him and his mannerisms—a quiet, generous man of great personal courage and immense friendship. I knew that he had something important to tell; but he was a gambler, of the deliberate, unhurried kind, and when talking he usually struck his subject from a tangent.

I picked up the paper and looked across the headlines.

"It's all in the headlines," said McFarland, biting off the end of a cigar. "That's all some people know. Others—" he eyed me—"others have to guess."

It seemed to me impossible that she could have been stolen, for everybody in the house must have been watching the child with that loving intensity with which recovered treasures are guarded, at least for a time.

Said McFarland:

"They must want the child bad. Keith was killed. This time they stole the maid. Somebody is certainly determined to have that baby. What—" he spoke slowly—"do you think about it?"

"The paper says nobody saw the maid leave the house."

"No. The Carrolls think she and the child were kidnaped together."

"Kidnaping," I said with perhaps sententious emphasis "is not so simple as it sounds."

"Never tried it, Don."

Pause.

"But I'm willing to give up a round hundred to anybody who can tell me how you got onto those Zimmermans."

I had nothing to answer. Pause.

"And I happen to know, too, that you need money."

I looked inquiringly, but did not answer.

"When a fellow is so —— proud that he won't touch reward money; well, you can make sure that he's like a threadbare gentleman who won't accept your invitation to dinner because he thinks you know he is hungry."

Pause; a long pause.

"Besides, I used to carry a core of Confederates in my roll. I know the symptoms. And I don't suppose you looked at your hand that day when we declared that healthy jackpot a sweetener for the reward?"

"Yes," I said. "I had a pair of kings."

"Did you? Well, I took a free look at all the hands lying around when I was gathering up the chips. And all things considered—your *pair* of kings and the fact that you brought in the Zimmermans—I think you won that jackpot."

He pulled a roll from his pocket and as he counted said:

"All the men that were in the game agree on this. It isn't much considering"—pause—"the shoemakers——"

He stopped, looked at me, added—

"—the return of Kate——"

I showed no sign of surprize.

"—but I'll be jiggered, son, if I can figure what Steck Jordan had to do with all this. Supposing you tell me?"

"Tell what?"

"Well, for one thing, how you were so careless as to leave your gun on the floor of his room?"

"*My* room was robbed last week. Didn't you know?"

"And I suppose your guns were stole off you while you slept? You forget, son, who sold you those forty-fours; and I always keep the number of every gun my hands have touched. Room robbed, eh? You are not slow with the tongue-trigger either. But why were you so secret about getting little Kate home to her folks?"

"Why do you think I took the baby home?"

"Uh? The baby said some man brought her from the Lovely Lady's house, so——"

"Lovely lady?"

"Innocent boy, aren't you, son? I remember how Sara La Verge was trying to get hold of you that night."

"That," I told him, "is no reason for thinking that I am the man."

"No, not a bit in the world, son. The reason came late this afternoon, just after we heard Kate had been stolen again. Sara La Verge got hold of me on the phone. She asked me please to go find you and say that you must come to her at once. To say that she wanted you to do exactly what you had done the last time; that you would know what she meant—after you saw the papers.

"Let's have a showdown, boy. What have you got to say?"

I said—

"You are much older and more experienced than I; and do even you think you understand a woman when she doesn't say what she means—just leaves you to guess?"

As he put his hat on and got up slowly to go he answered:

"There are times when I understand a man even less when he does say what he means. You have said it was none of my business, and so it isn't. But I'll tell you this."

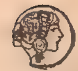
He looked straight and hard from under the wide brim of his soft black hat.

"There are not many men could be mixed up as you are in a thing like this without me making it some of my business to find out why and all about it. But you—I've got a lot of faith in you, son. So if you happen now or later to need any help, just sing out."

As he got to the door I told him he was leaving something and pointed to the money on the table. He said, "You are something of a fool after all," and, walking to the table, took up the money; then added:

"Maybe you are right. I guess it is Sara this reward money ought to go to. Talk it over with her if you like. I'm not saying anything to anybody."

Then he went away.



I FOUND Sara La Verge restless but not excited; and she paced up and down her room with long strides. She was a woman of splendid body and beauty. She was now dressed in a short tartan skirt and a gray woolen blouse, and watched the clock.

"I'm half frozen already," she said. "And the night air will be cold. The house is in some forsaken place out by the Presidio, and you have to come with me, Don—part way anyway. I'm not going alone, or just with Ah Quong. There is no one but you. I'm sorry about your arm, but it really makes no difference. If one of my arms and both my legs were broken, still I would go. How did you hurt it?"

But she did not wait for an answer.

She strode back and forth over the golden figures wrought into the carpet. She nervously pressed her hands together, put knuckles to mouth, clasping her hands behind her and unclasping them. Her movements were energetic, full of life; and with tireless step she walked to and fro; and now and then she talked.

She was speaking of Steck Jordan:

"He must have been planning a long time to steal Kate. Yesterday again he demanded money of me. I said, 'I told you I would never give you another dollar.'

"I remember how he laughed. 'Don't be too sure,' he said. 'I've got to have money. Some friends of mine are in trouble. It isn't for me. Don't be too sure I won't get it, and from you.'

"I told him that the only thing I could be sure of was what came out of my own pocketbook. 'We'll see,' he said. And he stole her.

"He knows how I love her. Oh, he knows why! I would give up anything and everything for her. He knew then what he was going to do, the wretch."

I suggested that the reported kidnaping of last Sunday had put the idea into his head.

"Into his head? Don, he doesn't need anything like that to put villainy into him. The nurse is gone—that means she lost her head over him. Oh, it does! I know his way with women. . . . Don't ask me how he got to meet her. I am not so bad that I know all the devil's tricks. But what was easier than for the nurse simply to carry the baby out the back way and get in a closed carriage?"

"You ask," I told her, "as if *I* knew all of the devil's tricks."

Neither of us said anything for a while, and she walked back and forth in the room, and was all the time moving her hands, pressing them together, pulling at her fingers, putting them to her ears, folding her arms behind her and at once dropping them and locking them in front of her. She was restless, like a half-tamed animal in a little cage.

"What will I do if I don't get— Oh, I must get her! I will get her! That baby, that poor little baby! Don, I can hear her crying. Her little sobbing voice is right in my ears. If he hurts that child— Oh, why won't *prayers* kill a thing like he is!"

"Why not try it?"

She stopped short and with the beginning of anger in her voice said—

"Are you trying to make fun of me?"

"No. But I would try everything, even prayers, before I gave up money under threat."

"Don, he knows I love her more than anything in the world. That there isn't anything I wouldn't do for her."

"Then why not go with the truth, all of it, to the Carrolls? They love her as much as you. They are this night more distressed. They would——"

"No!"

"—do anything to get her back."

"No, no!"

"Besides, she is their daughter and——"

"No, oh no!"

"—and really love her more——"

"No, no, I tell you!"

"—and would give the money——"

"No, a thousand *no's* before I would go to them!"

"Very well," I said, "have it your way."

It was just about at this moment that Ah Quong came in, moving with a noiseless shuffle; and he eyed me with a dubious expression.

"What luck?" Sara asked.

"Much lucky," said the Chinaman with a glance from the corner of his eye over his shoulder at me.

Then she told him that it was all right, my being there; that I knew all about everything and was going with them. Ah Quong turned his black eyes more squarely on me and smiled till his teeth showed, then bowed slightly.

Sara lifted to a table a little satchel that had been under it; and Ah Quong began emptying his pockets onto the table, and laid handfuls of gold and wads of greenbacks on it, while Sara took from the satchel money she had received for mortgaging the furnishings of her apartment. I don't know, and I never knew, from where Ah Quong had got the money he had, but guessed he had gone among his own countrymen. Together they counted it; and found that they were short some five thousand dollars.

"I've drained every friend that has a dollar," she said with momentary helplessness, looking thoughtfully at the yawning mouth of the satchel.

I wrote a note to Dan McFarland and gave it to Ah Quong; and as is usually the case when help comes in the nick of time Sara La Verge was more grateful to me than to others who had given twice as much.

Steck Jordan had given her the address, or rather the location, of a house away out in the direction of the Presidio; and also the warning that, if she did not come to the house alone or if any attempt was made to catch him, the child would be killed. It was the usual sort of precautionary warning that the kidnaper gives, and the victim can do nothing less than abide by it—or run the risk of having the threat carried out.

But she wanted me to go with her to within a block or so of the house, to be a companion on the way there and back. Ah Quong and I went.

She left to me the finding of a conveyance; so we rode out in a cab driven by an old man who knew the city as well as the fingers of his hand; and as I knew him well enough to know that he had no curiosity and even less love of the police, I was sure that if well paid he would ask no questions and drop no remarks about what may have happened.

Ah Quong sat with the cabman; and Sara and I were in the darkened cab with the satchel on the seat beside her. My arm had been tightly bandaged against the breast to hold the shoulder up so that it would not knit in a sagging position; and the cramp from the bandages was very great.

When friends of mine told me of the torturing jacket used at San Quentin, when almost the entire body was fiercely cramped, I had but the memory of a broken collarbone to judge the torment by; which was enough to cause me to wonder how men endured the strait-jacket and lived. Many of them did not; and most of the others were broken men in everything but spirit.

The horse went on with a heavy, weary, plodding trot, the tireless without-haste-and-without-rest pace of the old-time cab-horse whose plog-plog-plog-plog on the down-town pavement was like the heartbeat of the city.

The cabman said that he knew the house; that three or four months before some tramps had been living there, and when the policemen rounded them up one of the cops was killed. He said it was standing more than a block from any other house with a clump of eucalyptus trees in the yard.

The whole district was thinly built up, and of houses that seemed to have wandered off in a sort of lonesome poverty to the outskirts of the city. A half-moon filtered through patches of thin clouds that moved rapidly. The lots and even streets were overgrown with the weeds and grasses that burst up through the California Spring with the rapidity of a Hindu magician growing orange-trees under your nose; and with the drought they would perish as rapidly.

When we got to within sight of the house the cabman, as he had been told to do, stopped; and, opening the door, pointed with the butt of his whip off in the night to where in the vague light tall, giant-like shadows stood motionless, like sentinels on guard.

"Them's the 'calyptus," said the old cabman. "It's there's the place."

Sara got out slowly, her eyes fixed in the gloomy distance to where a point of light came from out the shadows like a sinister beacon to guide her; and the satchel sagged heavily in her hand.

This was as near as it would have been discreet for us to drive.

"But this seems such a long way off," she said; and that was as much as she showed of fear. The scene was lonesome and gloomy enough to make almost anybody's feet falter a little, but she did not hesitate.

"If anybody was to come with me it would give him excuse for not doing what he promised—not that he needs an excuse——"

She spoke more to herself than to me; and with a half-whispered good-by, whispered because her throat was tight, she started off with long, mannish, resolute strides. She plunged straight through the wild oats that came to her waist, taking a short cut and hurrying to have it over with.

There must, I thought, be watchers under those trees; and perhaps they had night-glasses; but in order that no one on the lookout there might suspect that Sara La Verge had been accompanied even so far by two or three men, I stood close to the cab so that I would not be outlined in the moonlight.

I had thought that I would have to go to the labor and distance of getting on the other side of the house and work my way up on the chance that I could reach there unseen not long after she arrived; for I by no means intended that Mr. Steck Jordan should get off so easily as he seemed to think. I guessed that part of the great pressure on him for money had come through the need of getting funds for the defense of the Zimmermans; and I would do almost anything at any time to spoil a case for such criminal lawyers as Thomas Platt Marks—in addition to having a little personal matter to take up with this Jordan.

Now when I saw the wild oats so thick and tall I did not think a distant watcher could be sharp-eyed enough to spot a furtive movement through them in the vague moonlight; so without saying anything to anybody, but crouching low, I moved away from the cab and got into the grass and worked my way toward the clump of tall, dark trees.

I went cautiously and on three legs, as one might say, stopping often to listen and now and then to peer out and readjust my bearings. When I was not quite half-way there I lost sight of Sara La Verge, who had already got into the blackness underneath the trees.

I went close to the house; and the nearer I got the more cautiously I moved.

I saw something pass before the light from the window two or three times, but I could not tell whether the shadow was made by somebody walking on the inside or the outside of the house; and I wanted to be sure of not disturbing anybody who might be on guard.

I came as close as I dared without finding out a little more of what was going on; that is, I came right to the edge of the oats. I have since learned that foxtails are about the only things that will grow in the shadow of eucalyptus. And I waited, crouched and listening.

I could hear the mumble of voices. They seemed to have that half-repressed but insistent and nearly shrill hum that comes when you strike the side of a bee-hive. With my ears set to catch and hold every sound I got Sara's tone distinctly. It was rising higher and higher in anger until it burst shrill and clear in a half-screamed oath; and in the pause that followed she was answered with round, slightly forced but amused laughter.

In that instant I was nearly startled by the low sharp cry thrown out of the blackest of shadows right up against the house where a figure had evidently been lurking to watch the outside and also to listen to what went on inside.

"Who's there?"

The voice spoke with a low huskiness, as if to challenge a prowler without alarming the people in the house who might overhear; as if indeed the man who spoke had not been quite sure that there was anything to challenge.

Surely, I thought, no movement of mine had been noticed, for I had been still for some time. I crouched as low as I could, motionless, holding a revolver half across my body and ready to shoot the instant any shadow-shape appeared above me. I could not understand what had attracted the watcher's attention.

I waited. He waited. It seemed a game of patience. There was silence in the house too.

Then I heard Steck Jordan speaking through the window—

"What is it, Burns?"

"Nothin', I guess. But I'll make sure."

With that there came a slow, heavy footfall as when a bulky man moves unhurriedly; and I settled down on myself as close to the ground as I could, and a serpent's tooth of fire would have struck him had he come through the grass to where I was; but this Burns person did not move at all in my direction. He walked out a ways to the front of the house, trampled about for a little while and said doubtfully:

"It uz nothin', I guess. But——"

"Of course it was nothing," said Steck Jordan with a self-sufficient tone; then half-tauntingly—and I knew he had turned and was speaking to Sara—he said—

"I hardly thought you would dare do what I told you not to."

His powerful, cultured, carefully inflectional voice went on with that deliberation which some people use when they enjoy the sound of their own words.

"But of course I couldn't risk having the child here. Just supposing you had had a lot of policemen strung out around here? A fine mess I would have been in, eh? I said she'd be turned over safe and sound, and—" with the half-aggrieved complaint of unjust suspicion—"I always keep my word."

"You lie!"

Her voice was sharp with rage, almost quavering in the high notes of despair.

Steck Jordan moved away from near the window, and I could not hear so plainly, but I could understand from what I did hear that he was telling her for the second or third time that when she got back to the city she would find that the baby had already been taken home, to the Carrolls.

And Sara was not convinced.

Steck Jordan put on an injured inflection that his word of honor should be thought valueless; and he told her that he was really, honestly and sincerely speaking the truth.

"If I never told it before I'm telling it now," he said. "But I usually do tell the truth, Sara."

I was in the awkward position of trying to listen to two things at once, to watch the almost invisible shadow of the fellow called Burns, to hear his footsteps and so know of his movements, and also to catch what was being said inside of the house. And when more by sound than by sight I knew that the heavy-bodied sentinel had walked to the other side of the house I went forward rapidly, and noiselessly as I could I drew myself down in the shadows right up against the wall of the house and a few feet from the window. It was safer there than elsewhere, for he would not be casting suspicious glances around and down at his heels.

But all that I heard just then was the bitter reproaches that Sara La Verge threw at her brother. Bitterly she recalled dates and names that evidently referred to times when she had misguidedly done something to help him; and his interjected answers were words of almost humble gratitude.

Her anger was not without a certain dignity. She was not hysterical. In some characters pain ennobles; and she was no giddy, fluffy, moth-like person to be sent fluttering to the ground by a sweep from a hand; but she was beaten.

She said—

"Hear what I tell you, Harry Rand——"

Her firm contralto voice took on an imperative slowness, a deliberation, tense with calm; and as she spoke her words grew stronger, her voice deepened with passion, and the unconscious thunder of emotion rolled in her tones.

It may have been the night wind coming in from the bay, and perhaps it was; but anyway as I listened something so like a shiver went over me that I had a distinct sense of chill.

"Hear what I tell you, Harry Rand, and mock me if you dare! I have heard our mother curse the cradle that rocked you, and she lies now uneasy in her grave because of the evil you have done. You were a brother and handsome, more like *your* father than mine; yet all these years I have been like melted wax in your fingers; and I prayed—yes, I, even I—have prayed for strength to believe you better than you are.

"You were a weakness with me, and there was nothing I would not have forgiven you until you came this time with your fingers out like claws to take away from me what is more than money, more than life, more than life eternal. . . . Be still, and hear me till I'm through!

"In the last flickering folly of my weakness for you I can not, I will *not*, believe that you killed Keith, else I would have come with death for you and not with money.

"Don't ask a woman what makes her folly, because I can tell you nothing but the pain there is in it; and when Keith begged me to let him put our child in the crib where his sister's new-born dead little girl lay, I cried the night out—and a thousand nights since that no one but an old Chinaman has known about—but let him do it because he said his sister would die too when she knew her child was dead. The baby would be loved, Keith said, and raised with more wealth and tenderness and honor. That word 'respectability' is what stung me into doing it! And nobody, he said, would know.

"So he and Ah Quong took away my barely born daughter and in the night brought back to me a tiny little lifeless thing that I snatched up and tried to warm against my bursting, aching breast. And he thought I had lost my mind. It was nearly so. He tried to be all the world to me, but men can not be babes except to their own mother.

"I would *not* marry him as you have sneered at me for not doing, because I loved him too much. I wanted him to be a great man; and I came to pity him because he came to have so much sorrow and regret that he had taken my child away to give to a woman that had everything, yet hated me so much for his loving me. Oh, life is a —— fraud, all of it! . . . Be still, you. I am not done.

"It was foolish pride that let me tell you. That, and the hope you meant it when you said your hands were clean, that you had been misjudged and abused, and that you would be a real brother from then on. I've always had a silly weakness, and you knew it, for the idea of family ties; and you are the only one I have—excepting *her*, whom I can't claim!

"I'm paying for pride and folly; more than in money, too.

"And I want you to know this, Harry Rand. Take that money. It's the last you will ever get from me—not though your dead body needs a sheet to wear to the grave. Somehow I don't mind giving this to you, because it's like the final payment of a tormenting debt. Not that I've ever owed you anything but tears—I pay no man's debt with tears!

"But from this night on I am a woman with a purpose. And that purpose is to force myself up in the world, to make people respect me and accept me and honor me; and if it takes twenty years I'll work my way up to where I can meet my daughter as a friend. All I pray God for is that her life may be happy, and that if she ever has need of help I may be near enough to give it to her.

"And don't you sneer, you! From this night on, I know where I am going. And don't you ever cross my way again. I warn you well.

"Now tell me once more, and on your honor—I mean as you know God will strike you if you lie: Is Kate on her way home?"

He answered softly, as if subdued, even chastened, by the noble intensity of her emotion:

"Why, I told you she was. She is there by now."

"By now? Swear it!"

"I swear it."

"Raise your right hand and swear. I want to believe you."

"I swear it. Sara girl, I am not such a bad fellow."

His cultured voice was soothingly convincing.

"I got in a jam with a fellow, and I had to have some money. Twenty-five thousand dollars. I knew you wouldn't understand if I just tried to explain, and it hurt me, Sara, it hurt me dreadfully that you wouldn't believe me!

"But I'll pay this back. I'll do that. You'll see. I'll show you. And the baby, why, she's been home long ago by this time. I knew you'd come. I just got Charlotte to hide her for a——"

"Charlotte?"

"The nurse. I got her to hide the baby for a few hours. Just long enough to give you a scare. That's all. I'm sorry, Sara. But she's home, safe and sound. Honest."

"You swear it?"

"I swear. Every word's the truth. I'm not half what you think. You have been fair and square with me; and I appreciate it. I really do. You'll see one of these days I'm not half bad. A little unlucky. And that baby, why—why, Sara, she is *my* little niece. I love her too."

"Harry?"

"Honest, Sara. But you know when a fellow's in a jam he has to do anything. I'm sorry. But the baby—she's never been any farther from her home than just around the block. You wouldn't want me to have brought the little thing 'way out here, would you? And scared her to death in an old house like this, and strange people? I tell you, I'm proud of her being my niece. She's the prettiest child in San Francisco."

"I want to believe you," said Sara La Verge in level tones; and I knew that she was looking at him straight and hard.

"I want you to believe me, and in me, Sara. I'm awfully sorry to have put you out this way. I'll have Burns take you back to your — You came in a cab, didn't you?"

"I'll go alone," she said. "I'd rather. But Kate is home?"

"Kate is home. Yes. At home all snuggled up in her little trundle bed. You can count on that. Just call up the Carroll house when you get back. Don't need to say who you are."

Pause.

"I believe you," said Sara La Verge.

I saw her shadow as she came from the door and I heard him say good-by; but she did not answer.

I could not see clearly; but in the silence I knew that the two men, Burns and Harry Rand, *alias* Steck Jordan, were watching her dark figure pass from under the eucalyptus and move more and more vaguely through the moonlight toward the dark, small blot that the cab and horse made on the landscape.

Then said Steck Jordan:

"You see, I knew she'd come alone. You had the shivers, Burns; but I *know* that girl."

"But, boss, I c'd swear two or three times tonight I seen somethin'—heard it, I mean."

"Too much imagination, Burns. Too much. We'll skedaddle from here right away. Everything's going fine, isn't it? Just like I said, didn't I? Tell Charlotte to come in here."

A woman's voice spoke half-wearily from within the room:

"Oh, I'm here. And I must say when it comes to lying you are ——"

Steck Jordan laughed with pleasure, and asked—

"How's the kid?"

"Poor little thing. Oh, it's terrible to keep a gag on her. She's dead for sleep, and choking, sobbing. I wish—oh, I wish——"

"Oh brace up, brace up. It doesn't hurt her. We just shook the jolly Sara down for twenty-five. We'll now proceed to prod fifty or more out of the Carrolls. Good business, eh? Oh-ho, think of 'em paying fifty thousand to get that little——"

That was as far as he got. I had crept to the edge of the door and was waiting. Burns was some feet inside of the room, his back to me, and the three of them stood close together, attracted by the opened satchel that Steck Jordan held in his hand.

And just as Steck Jordan paused in his sentence to laugh a little at the idea of the Carrolls paying for the child there came from the adjoining room the gasping, heart-broken half-sigh and half-sob of a child; and there is no sound under heaven that so hurts the heart as the tortured moan of a child.

"The gag's slipped," said Steck Jordan, startled.

All of them were startled.

"Not that gag," said Charlotte with studious puzzlement, as she hesitated for a moment, listening, then stepped toward the door.

"Lucky it didn't yell while—" Burns began.

"Why so?" I demanded sharply; and as the three of them turned I added: "Hands up and quick about it. Up!"

A half-second's hesitation, and the satchel slipped from Steck Jordan's hands and they went up.

"Tricked, by ——!" slipped from his lips.

I nodded a little in agreement; and said:

"Miss La Verge took you in very cleverly, didn't she? Thought she would believe a story like that, did you? You should know Mr. eh—Rand, isn't it?—that your sister is an accomplished actress. And from the way I see it, the gallows will get *you*——"

The woman Charlotte was near the doorway into the next room. She bolted against the door in a desperate, frantic lunge, and swung it wide. The door opened on darkness.

I was not off guard. I could have shot. But she was a woman, back to me.

The two men turned heads over shoulders, staring at the doorway. The door had not closed behind her, but, swinging on rusty if not broken hinges, stayed open.

Out of sight, instantly she had screamed; and in the wildest of terror her voice rose to the notes of horror and broke. As we looked she came staggering backward out of the doorway, her hands in the air and fluttering outstretched, weakly snatching, trying to catch something, anything; but there was nothing, and she fell stumblingly, full on her back, dead. A long knife had been driven into her breast.

There was not, there had not been, the faintest sound but her own movement and cry from the next room.

I have told as nearly as I could just how it happened; and in an unguarded moment I stared with stupid wonder at the glistening black handle of the knife that had come to her as if sent by a witch's curse. And if Steck Jordan had reached stealthily instead of snatching for his gun he would again have had the first shot; but the very rapidity of the gesture was a warning that I saw as a man sees something off to the side of him though looking ahead; and I killed him.

He took the bullet into his heart and the big body of the man dropped with a half-gyrating movement. The fall of it shook the rotten floor of the old shack.

I had half-turned as I shot; and the burly Burns went through a window. The glass in the window was all broken, practically broken out; and he went through it, carrying away the sash.

I jumped to the window, but he was scrambling off and began to run; so I did not shoot. If he got out of the way, as far as I was concerned he was as good as dead; besides, my gun was pointed toward the next room.

I went to the doorway, paused, listened, spoke; not a sound but my own voice coming back to me with the hollow resonance of a bare, empty room. I looked inside, and there was nothing but blackness with only a dim splotch that marked an open door at the back of the room. I called. No answer.

I took the lantern from a nail, and, holding it high, went into the room. I did not like to do this, for I was practically disarmed while holding the lantern over my head the better to see. But I found nothing, nothing but a cloak that had been worn by the woman Charlotte. The child was gone.

What had been done, was finished. There was nothing to find, no one to question; and I could do no more than look around me and wonder. So, picking up the satchel and putting down the lantern, I went away.

Outside the house, with the moon for a minute or two clear of clouds, I saw the black spot two hundred yards away that I knew as the cab; and I realized that Sara was waiting.

As for the shot—houses were few and far apart. And, being fired indoors, the sound had been deadened.

I hurried stumblingly forward, running awkwardly as a one-armed man must do over the uneven ground. When I came up the old cabman was sitting on the seat, legs crossed, elbow on knees, pipe in mouth; and beside him Ah Quong, half-huddled in listless patience with a cigaret glowing at his lips, was perched in silence; but in the moonlight I caught his jet-black eyes, saw the glistening glance that he put into his look at me, and all the mystery vanished.

Inside of the cab Sara La Verge with strained and broken voice tenderly soothed a child that sighed sobbingly.

V

LATER, twenty years later.

All who knew of the girl that had been Sara La Verge, now Madame Sara Brand—she used the *Madame* out of some fancied pleasure as before she had called herself La Verge—thought that she had turned that comforting old family motto about a good name being better than a golden girdle all topsyturvy and askew; for if there was anything that she wanted it seemed that she need do nothing but ask for it, or at least she could buy it; she had money beyond the power of the envious to guess at its weight; she had health, splendid health, and enough of her beauty left to keep people whispering among themselves of the abuse she had made of it in her younger days.

But on the surface she was respected. Rich people usually are except by shabby socialists. Her public-spirited gifts and charities, her extremely generous and rich entertainments, the many prominent social names that appeared with hers as among those present here and there, made it seem to the public as if she had everything that a woman could wish.

Sara Brand threw over her San Franciscan prejudices and moved to Los Angeles about the same time that Montague Saens, heir to all the Saens estate, came out of the Southland and married Kate Carroll; and no doubt when she picked the site for her country home Sara Brand knew that her grounds ran around the hill and down into a cañon and there joined the property line on which young Saens was building a new country place.

Wealth and idleness make people want spiced wines and merry nights, which are not necessarily evil, as among another caste not inevitably virtuous, sweat-worn bodies make them want bread and sleep. And Sara Brand had no way of keeping her social friends but by such entertainments as pleased; so in the mansion built on the warm slope of a Verdugo hill there was only the same kind of sumptuous and no doubt a little more prodigal pleasure that went on in other, though perhaps not in all other, of the palatial homes that by the rubbing of dollars, as formerly in another warm romantic land by the rubbing of the Lamp, have been built with almost Arabian Nights rapidity.

But Madame Brand had to content herself with looking upon her neighbors from afar. The Saenses were so high up in the world that they had to watch out to keep from bumping their heads against the stars with which the sky is cluttered; but as far as beauty, wealth and caste went Kate Carroll was a princess worthy to wear their purple.

For all the social intercourse that Madame Sara Brand, and such friends as she had, succeeded in having with the Saenses and their set, her estate might as well have been on a peak in the Himalayas. Yet the names of the Saenses and their doings somehow or other mingled with the tinkle of cocktail glasses and teacups' clink about the tables of those far lower down on the social plane.

One white Spring night with a full moon on top of the sky, Sara Brand and myself were together on a balcony and said but few words in the restful silence that friends may have together. A party was going on with frolicsome merriment. A roulette-wheel clicked. An unseen orchestra bewitched tingling toes with jazz.

Some hours before she had taken me through the house, proudly pointing out this extravagance and that; the costly bric-à-brac, the carven panels torn out of Old-World palaces to adorn her own; expensive things of which she did not pretend to know the value except by her check-stubs.

I do not dance. I do not play roulette. I was leaving in the morning.

"When guests have a croupier," said Sara Brand, "they don't need a hostess. The winnings go to a newsboys' home, so everybody that loses feels virtuous."

A young maid came out on tiptoes and spoke in little more than a whisper.

"Had a breakdown? Jane, *who* did you say?" Madame Brand demanded.

"Captain McSalters," said Jane more clearly. I could hear. "He's in a great hurry and wants to borrow a car to make a train."

The tingle of cocktail glasses and teacup-tongues had sounded Captain McSalters' name often, and Kate Saens' too.

"I'm going to get a look at him," said Madame Brand. "Come on, Don."

I was uninterested in the appearance of Captain McSalters, but I went with her down the back stairs and out through the house to the garage where a slender, delicately featured young man was nervously shifting his feet while Madame Brand's chauffeur, to whom he had applied for a car, stood with folded arms and watched him from the corner of his eyes.

Captain McSalters was agitated and talked jerkily. Car broken down. Right in front of Hill Dome entrance. Awfully in a hurry. Appreciate terribly loan of a car. Had to get a train. Tremendously important.

And whether it was because Madame Brand did not seem very much impressed and he wanted to make his case more urgent, or whether he did not fully realize what he was saying, he went on: Had to get a train—in fact had to get Mrs. Saens to a train.

"Where is *she?*" demanded Madame Brand.

He smiled in an agitated, fleeting kind of effort, and gave himself further away with the weakened bluff of—

"You don't think there is anything *wrong?*"

"I don't know what I think," she said with a strange manner of authority, standing like an opera queen.

When he told that Mrs. Saens was down on the boulevard by the dead car, she said to her chauffeur:

"Rhead, jump in the roadster. Drive down and get—" almost she said Kate, but checked herself—"Mrs. Saens."

As the car came slowly backing out of the big garage, built on the squat, solid lines of Spanish masonry, Captain McSalters stepped to it, reaching inside to open the door of the moving roadster.

"No, captain," said Sara Brand with unhurried tone, and deliberate, almost accusing firmness; "you had better stay here. Rhead will bring her right up. Go quickly, Rhead."

"Yes'm," said the expert Rhead.

With a back and turn he swung the car around and plunged down the asphalt roadway.

Captain McSalters was rather delicately featured for a man of war; of the youngish type, with a bit of mustache like two dabs of fur under his nostrils. I saw him watching Sara Brand with quickened, stealthy alarm; and when she looked at him he tried to smile reassuringly.

"I say, Mrs. Brand, you—you don't—you haven't—really this places me in an awfully awkward position. Mrs. Saens *must* get the train."

Madame Brand was always erect and square-shouldered; and with years and wealth and the increase of a certain worldly contempt for the world had acquired stately poise. Faint echoes, breath-blown, had whispered that Captain McSalters was attentive, very, to Mrs. Saens.

"Is some one ill, some member of her family, Captain McSalters?" she asked with a cool half-smile.

The nervous, slender young captain gave a startled jerk at the question. The quivering smile struggled to his lips and fled at once.

"Yes, yes," he said. "Very ill. She must get home—er—I mean to her mother at once."

"Her mother is ill?" asked Madame Brand with cruel directness; and as the captain fumbled for what to say the pretty young maid, Jane, came flying from the house, breathless and wide-eyed.

I believe that she had telephoned the Saens home, perhaps making some gossiping inquiry of some friend in the servants' hall there; anyway she ran up in such a flutter that she could hardly talk, and gasped:

"Oh—oh, Mr. Saens has been killed! Mr. Saens—killed—and— Oh!"

Madame Brand said nothing and did not hesitate. With a slow, unhurried, sweeping gesture she put the excited girl aside, and, taking a half-step forward, looked down in regal silence upon the captain.

He dropped his head for a moment, his fingers working nervously as he turned slightly this way and that as if furtively watching for a way out; then he straightened up with an effort at composure.

"Yes, madam, *I* killed him!"

Madame Brand folded her bare arms, and her fingers fastened so tightly that I afterward saw the blue-black stain from the pressure on her flesh. In a slow, hard tone she demanded—

"Why?"

Captain McSalters stiffened; his shoulders straightened; he stood rigidly, head up, chin in, like a man who will wear not a blindfold before the firing squad.

"A private quarrel, madam. One that concerns nobody but myself and Saens."

Her voice nearly broke, but it did not, as she said with low deep-throated pain—

"And Katherine Saens is running away with the man that murdered her husband!"

"Madame!"

He spoke fiercely.

"Madame, you can not understand. And I shall not even try to tell you. *I* killed Saens! *She* had nothing to do with it. She must get to her home."

There was a faint, insistent, roaring hum; and a black bug with glaring eyes came through the moonlight up the roadway and stopped quite at our feet with swift and noiseless ease as Rhead, almost before it had stopped, jumped down with soldierly precision and held open the door.

Katherine Saens hesitantly, unafraid, but with doubtful glances this way and that, looked at us. Then as if sensitively warned by our silence and watchful eyes that we knew, she stepped down from the car.

Tall, dark, with features on which a rich beauty softened the pride of caste, at that moment tense and unhumbled, she looked from Captain McSalters, who with a hand put out toward her had lost what he wanted to say to Sara Brand.

Sara Brand's arms were down and half-reaching out. She leaned as if against invisible ropes. The look on her face which none of them could read was the look of torture I had seen there before, years before. And with the clairvoyance of great love from which nothing can be hid she asked of her with the low, aching tenderness of a woman who weeps at a tomb—

"Why, oh why, did you do it?"

Captain McSalters jerked himself up in nervous surprise and said rapidly—

"I told you I—*I*—I killed him."

His words were thrown away. Neither of the women heard.

Katherine Saens felt—she would have been stone not to have felt—the fervid, imploring sympathy poured out by the stranger woman, though perhaps it touched her only unconsciously, for she answered in a trace-like defiance with steady, clear tone:

"He defamed my mother, and would not be still. I shot him."

Madame Sara Brand's pained face went upturned, then dropped. For a moment she was unsteady. But her great courage and strength did not fail. She lifted her face again and with hands out and upturned helplessly moaned—

"Oh, God—*oh!*"

I put a hand on Captain McSalters' arm, and, speaking low and apart from other ears than his, said:

"Tell me what happened. We will do anything to help."

With sort of fragmentary gestures and broken sentences, at once eager and dazed, pouring out words but not knowing what to say, he tried to tell, and said of Montague Saens:

"Monty was mad—clear out of his head. He must have been crazy. I know he was drinking. My ——, imagine! Some doctor friend from San Francisco—some lunatic—made Monty believe Kate wasn't her father's daughter. About the eyes, color of the eyes. Something about parents with blue eyes can't have brown-eyed — Oh, he was an utter beast about it. He wouldn't stop. Talked about the Saens honor!

"That —— doctor-fool told Saens to look out or Kate would be like her mother. Said it was a now known scientific fact about the eyes—evidence in any court. Proved it to Monty or something. I ought to have shot him myself. Kate warned him that her mother's name was not to be abused.

"I guess he'll die. Ought to. Said he was going to use that to get a divorce. Somebody ought to kill that doctor, too. Never was a finer woman than Mrs. Saens."

He glared as if challenging me to doubt it.

A few minutes later, a very few, Madame Sara Brand's great, powerful limousine with stately glide and soft drone of engine vanished down the driveway on a twelve-hour dash to San Francisco.

Captain McSalters did not go. Madame Brand told him in so many words that it would not do; and the gallant captain saw that it was so, though he probably never did realize how servants gossip and teacup chatter had for some time played with his name.

"But," said Madame Brand, "she must not go alone. Something might happen. I'm going to take her myself."

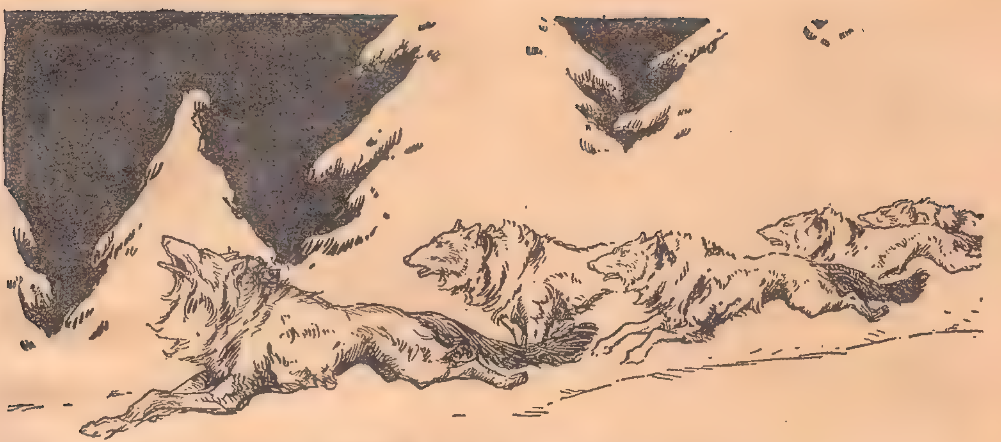
And so it happened.

Montague Saens did not die. I don't know how or even why it was done, but the papers said he accidentally shot himself; and though few people believed that still fewer seemed to know just what to believe. It didn't matter. A few months later Katherine Saens was given a divorce and her maiden name, and reappeared in society as if little or nothing had happened.

People wondered a whole lot harder and longer how and why it had happened that a woman like Madame Sara Brand had ever got to be friends with a young, proud, autocratic beauty like Katherine Carroll; which was all the more strange because Madame Brand suddenly and completely gave up the social frumpery and pretense that had tormented her for twenty years. She told me that she was too old for such foolishness.

She never went back to Hill Dome, but closed it up by wire and left it to go to pieces:

"All right, I'll tell you why. I want it to stay there and rot and crumble and get rickety until one of these days when Montague Saens goes prowling through, just poking around to see what he can see, his footsteps 'll jar a ton of brick and mortar right down on top of him. . . . Don't look so, so—well, so like you are looking. So far in my life hasn't everything I really wanted come true? Well, then?"



The Spirit of the North

by Alan Sullivan

ALONG the broad back of a great ridge the outline of a man moved slowly tramping down the snow with wide-webbed shoes whose symmetrical furrow stretched for leagues behind him. He leaned forward as he walked, a tall figure muffled in a woolen tunic, the capote down over his hard blue eyes. The visible portion of his face was tanned a deep brown—his mustache a cake of ice, and the breath from his hot lungs spouted little jets of vapor into the tingling air.

All around the land was white, save where a scanty growth lined the gulleys with thickets of spruce and birch. Over it sighed the winds of the north, whose chilling touch crept down from the Arctic circle and laid a cystallized finger of silence on the barren lands. The snow had wrapped the sharp edges of every ridge in a sheer blanket that stretched for a thousand miles, undulating in slow and glistening waves to the hard line of a distant horizon. It shone—a domain of death—where so late the wild rose blossomed and the air throbbed with innumerable wings.

The man halted, slackened his shoulders and sat for a moment on the pack-sack. He had come twenty miles and another twenty remained to traverse. He felt no fatigue for the muscles in his body were like well-oiled steel springs. Presently he stood up, stretched his arms, reassumed his load and swung down hill toward the nearest thicket of spruce. Here—after taking off his shoes—he built a small fire, made tea and ate sparingly of pork and bread. Both being frozen solid, he scorched them, meditatively, at the end of a stick.

He remained for half an hour, his strong jaws champing, tossing a morsel now and then to a jay who lit suddenly on a branch near by. Its head was tilted on one side, while, chattering sharply, it regarded him with bright inquisitive eyes. He rubbed a wisp of tobacco in his palm, smoked for a few moments, then knocking the ice from the webbing of his shoes, thrust his feet into the straps and swung on. Just at this moment there came to him on the wind a faint sound from beyond the ridge.

"By ——," he said under his breath.

An hour later he was four miles away, walking fast. His face was set, and a hard light glinted in his frosty eyes. Now and again he glanced over his shoulder—quick furtive glances that seemed to shrink from finding what they sought. The sound came less intermittently—clearer and nearer—the most terrible voice in the north—the voice of the terror of the wilderness.

Soon afterward he saw them, like black specks that moved steadily over a white counterpane—two miles away—but distinct in the glittering air. In single file they traveled, the tall leader lifting now and then its black muzzle and sending out a note of death—the hunting call of the pack. It drifted through the desolation. Fur and feather heard and knew it. Mink and marten tunneled into the snow, the rabbit scampered to his burrow and even carcajou, the wolverine, scuffled hastily for shelter.

The man too heard it and cursed. From the mouth of his pack-sack projected the sawed-off muzzle of a Winchester rifle. He unstrapped this and tested the magazine. There were three cartridges. His lips pressed tight, and glancing ahead, he strode off with quickened pace toward a clump of small timber that lay in a depression half a mile ahead. Once there he slipped off his burden. The voice of the pack was nearer now.

Selecting the largest spruce he chopped off the lower branches to a height of six feet, leaving a series of sharp points. Then, swinging the sack into the tree, he mounted swiftly, his rifle slung over his shoulder. Ten minutes later a gray wolf loped noiselessly by, smelt at the trampled snow and squatted on his haunches. In the next moment the green eyes were fastened on the man.

The long black muzzle opened and the call went forth—sharp and terrible. Came an answering whimper in the thicket and six more wolves trotted up, their gaunt frames moving with incredible smoothness. There was no sound save wind in the tree tops and the soft muffled thud as some laden branch deposited its weight of snow.

The seven beasts stared up and the man stared down. They were all full grown—but the bitch that led them was the biggest of all with long flanks, deep hairy chest, clean, sharp black muzzle and pointed ears. She spoke once—and the pack squatted, noses between forepaws, the fur deep on the ridges of their backs, the lips lifted a little, the green eyes fixed in a remorseless stare. They could afford to wait.

The man shifted gingerly to another branch. Instantly the seven brutes were erect, their backs bristling. The gray leader licked her dark muzzle, while from her shaggy throat came a warning note. Very slowly he pulled the Winchester from its case. When he looked down again the pack had scattered and circled with soundless feet fifty yards away, slipping like wraiths from tree to tree, visible one moment, invisible the next, implacable and restless, with death locked in their jaws. He perceived that it was useless to shoot. One could not kill a ghost.

The wind strengthened, till all around there was a swaying of thick green branches and a tumbling of snow. The patrol did not slacken. A little clear glade lay southward, and beyond he could see open country, wind-smitten—devoid of life. It was an hour when all that lived on the Barren Lands sought shelter—save only the gray terror of the wilds.

Rigid on his perch the man felt the cold strike more formidably. He felt it first in hands and feet, and knocked them together noisily; whereat there was a closing-in of the savage ring and a sharper gleam in the merciless eyes. He continued his movements until the tree was surrounded by a cordon of jaws, when suddenly he snatched at his rifle and fired.

There was a scattering of padded feet and the tall bitch dragged one leg while she yelped fury and revenge. The man laid his rifle carefully across a branch. He had two cartridges left. His brows were pulled down, his arms and legs were getting numb, the cold was reaching his body. He drew off one mit and pressed his palm against a frost bite on his cheek. He slipped a little, recovering himself with a queer feeling of sickness.

The light began to fade. Followed that amazingly short period when in high latitudes darkness seems to pour from the sky and crush out the day. The sky turned red, pink, gray, until a hard purple asserted itself. The evening star hung like a lamp low over the horizon. Simultaneously the pack found courage, closing in until the gaunt bodies were almost beneath him, as though they knew that he had but two cartridges left and was keeping one for himself. The tall bitch stood upright on hind legs and scratched at the frozen bark with extended claws. He could look straight down her throat. How black was the roof of her mouth! There was no yelping now, but only an occasional quick light panting of the deep chest. The pack had settled down to wait.

The man's thighs grew stiff where they gripped the tree. His back and shoulders had lost all heat and he felt the drowsiness that in the north heralds the approach of one's last sleep. It came to him that he must not wait too long or he would be alive when he tumbled. He felt again at the Winchester. This time the pack did not move. Very carefully he lowered the butt of the rifle till it rested on a lifeless foot. Then he drew the muzzle vertically under his chin.

A wolf in the outskirts of the circle put his nose into the air with a querulous whimper. Something in the sound of it galvanized his gray brethren into stiff attention. They stood like images, the wind lifting their long hair, their pointed ears rigid. Another whimper, and another, till suddenly the pack wheeled and raced like phantoms down the glade. The man, his rifle still in position, strained his smarting eyes. A mile away where the white plain glistened beneath a full moon he saw a cluster of dark bodies ploughing laboriously through the drifts. It was a band of coast caribou. The pack made for them, every throat flinging terrible cries into the night.

He waited for five minutes, then another five. Presently he dropped his pack-sack and half slid, half tumbled from his perch. He could not feel the toe straps of his shoes. Standing for a moment to make sure of the wind's direction, he broke into a half trot, trailing the rifle and heading downward. A spruce partridge cheeped sleepily in an adjoining tree. A mink pushed his head out of a crevice and stole light-footed to the strain of blood that shone like a ruby on the sparkling snow.

TEN miles away another man dragged himself slowly southward. The sinews of his legs were burning like fire. For hours he had tramped, traveling by the lay of the land and the run of hidden rivers. But now the punishment of the trail was on him, the trail that tempts and tortures, that allures and kills, the trail to which the hearts of men respond as to a trumpet call.

He had ten miles to go, but his food was exhausted. Matches he had in a tight box with a screw cap, and an ax. Ten miles back he had taken a wrong turn that led him through broken country where no man was meant to go. One shoe was broken. He had patched it up and tramped on, but his fingers were too stiff for fine work, and the frame gave at every step.

The pain in his legs increased, and he grew hungry. The fact rather than the hunger made him clench his lips and push on though every step was agony. He knew that to be hungry is to be cold—that to be cold is to be weak—and that for those who are weak the North has no mercy. He fired once at a rabbit and missed—his fingers being too stiff to manipulate the trigger.

His mind began to work queerly. It seemed to him that the North was like a mistress—beautiful but heartless—winning men's souls, then destroying them. Always, it appeared, this mistress did nothing. The men themselves did everything—theirs being the pride, the passion, and the offering. Then when she had taken everything she just waited with that wintry smile of hers and the end came very quickly. She did not change, being assured of interminable lovers from all corners of the earth who would in turn make their oblations and receive their grim reward.

Presently the pain became so great that he knew that he must rest no matter how that rest might end, and at that moment he saw ahead of him a stretch of glare ice where a river wound southward. He struck down hill thankfully. Reaching the ice he still wore his shoes so as to distribute weight, and moved on. His legs did not hurt so much now being relieved from lifting that weary webbing. He was looking at the line of scanty timber along the shore, when everything gave way beneath. Automatically he spread out his arms.

He was immersed neck deep in a chilling flood whose current tugged invisibly at the great shoes as though trying to rip them off. He twisted at them, but his mits slipped on the glare ice and the effort merely drew him under. The current clutched his body and through it there crept the first assault of breathless cold. He gasped sharply, seeming to have no feet left. Presently he tried again, staring at the shore which seemed so near and warm and unapproachable. He shouted, emptying his lungs, but heard only the drone of wind and the intense frost at work in the scanty timber, with sharp riflelike reports that died with dwindling echoes down far stretches of the manacled river. Then he knew that he must save himself—or die.

Twisting desperately, and pressing hard with his arms on the yielding ice, he turned his body upstream, and pointing his toes downward, he felt one foot then the other loosen. Another twist and his ankles came free. The blind current took the shoes swiftly. He rested a moment, and with a grim smile thrust one arm into the water and laid it dripping on the ice. Then the other. In a few seconds he was anchored, congealed and riveted there—a portion of a man—as though in supplication to some unknown god.

He began to pull, crooking his elbows. His shoulders lifted. There sounded a warning crack, but his breast was by now over the edge. He drew a long shivering breath and pulled again. This time his thighs came up. He crawled a few feet forward, the only wet thing in that bitter wilderness—but wet only for an instant. His clothing ceased to drip and became armor, stiffening momentarily, and gripping his exhausted body where no heat was. He began to shuffle arduously to the shore, crackling as he went—half-man, half-animal—seeking the shelter of the woods.

Reaching them, gasping, he broke open his packet and pulled at the match-box he could no longer feel. It was more difficult to get at his ax, the haft of which hung at his belt, its head in a leather pouch. His mittens refused to grasp it. He clutched with frozen hands, making cuts at dead trees, breaking dry twigs, stamping the snow. The cold had nearly reached his heart. He got the box open by holding the cap in his teeth, and finally lit a match by biting its head. This he pushed under a handful of birch bark, and stood breathless swinging his arms.

His circulation quickened a little. Savage spots developed in his face, hands and feet, where frost had struck deep. He lengthened the fire, heaping it high, then set to work building another six feet distant. Between them he toiled like a salamander, his clothing now dripping. Eight feet away it was forty below zero.

Ten minutes later he began to strip off his now softened armor, spreading it on branches stuck upright in the sodden snow. It steamed furiously, and he tended it in bare feet—clad only in drawers. There was a roaring of flames, a crackling of wood. In this recesss the wind did not reach him, but he was alternately baked and frozen as he moved toward or from the twin furnaces. Heat blisters spread among the frost bites, and his skin looked like mottled marble. In half an hour he smelt scorched cloth and dressed quickly. Here and there the clothing was burned through—but it was dry. His moccasins took the longest. Finally he gave this up and put them on—when they instantly became hard like parchment.

He struck out for the river bank wading through snow that came nearly to his middle. At the edge of the ice he paused, scanned the black spot where a glaze had already formed over an irregular hole, and began to struggle downstream, trusting to the ice as much as he dared, but clinging nevertheless within reach of the friendly shore.

TO THE west of the river lifted a medley of ridges, ironed smooth by the snow. On the other side of this a third man moved southward. From a mountain top it would have been seen that the trails of all three travelers converged toward the same point, where from a cluster of dark, green timber a thin gray pencil of smoke climbed into the keen air. It was a throb of life in the wilderness—a magnet to the wanderers—a place of warmth and food.

The third man progressed uncertainly, diverging now and then from the faint depression left by the swinging tread of some former traveler. He was tall and gaunt. His sunken cheeks were gray with frost, ice plastered his feet, and he walked with a strangely uncertain step, stopping now and then to rub his eyes and peer questioningly at the driven snow ahead.

He had been tramping thus since early morning. At noon his eyes began to smart and at two o'clock the rims of the lids were red and swollen. An hour later they began to stick, while a thick glutinous fluid oozed from their stinging corners. The flesh around them swelled rapidly and they burned as though seared with hot irons.

He pushed on drunkenly, swaying as he went, but ever the interminable glitter of the snow struck upward and smote him the more fiercely. The trail grew dim. Trees passed like men walking. His ears, sharpened by distress, became his interpreters, bringing him the faint squeak of small startled animals and a heavy beat of wings, as an ivory beaked raven winnowed the air overhead. The whiteness of the land grew blurred and his lips moved in a wordless petition. He walked now as one who sees with his feet, feeling for the slight hardness of the trail—the light of day being for him as darkness. Then his lids refused to be rubbed open and he could see no more.

He stood for a little while quite still feeling with moistened fingers to establish what wind might blow. His face expressed no fear, but just a dumb wonder that this thing should have come to him. There were so many other men abroad in the north. Suddenly it struck him that he had been a fool not to stop an hour ago, and make some kind of camp—and fire. That was what he wanted now—fire.

He stamped with his shoes to make sure he was on the trail, then to make doubly sure, took off his mits and felt beneath the light surface drift for the thickened shell that should lie just below. He found it unmistakably and nodded.

In the very middle of it he began to dig, using one shoe as a shovel and casting into the wind. Three feet down he came to moss, and, poking at arm's height, determined that his parapet was nearly level with his head. He stood now in a hole, some four feet square, with sharply sloping sides. Testing the wind again, he found none.

By this time he was used to the dark, though his eyes hurt more than ever, and opening his pack-sack—fumbling a little with the straps—he pulled out a pair of Hudson Bay blankets. Wrapping these round his body he thrust himself in as far as he could beneath the parapet, allowing the displaced snow to cover him completely. As it slid over his face, which was nearly hidden by a capote, he put out a hand, holding it stiffly till the slide ceased. The hand was presently withdrawn to inner darkness, leaving an irregular air hole, a few inches long. There was left but a depression, from which spurted small regular puffs of vapor. Beside it a pair of wide shoes stood up into the wind, and at the bottom lay a half-emptied pack-sack.

The moon came out, the cold intensified. In the pale light rabbits hopped like bundles of white fur with large pink eyes. An arctic owl circled with wide noiseless pinions above the hole, like a ghost of the wilderness. An otter came streaking up the trail, which here ran close to the river, leaving a narrow furrow in the loose drift. Carcajou—the wolverine and glutton—stared at the pack-sack, then slid down and began tearing it to pieces with strong white teeth till suddenly the jets of vapor caught his small black eyes and he scrambled back in a paroxysm of fear.

The moon swam majestically naked through a sky sown with innumerable stars, casting blue black shadows where the scattered spruce dotted the lower land. The river, like a strip of polished glass, wound southward—its surface whipped clear of snow. There was no sound save the steady drone from the north—a potent voice that through the Winter months holds its interminable pitch. In this abode of solitude, peopled by fur and feather wise in the law of the wilderness and waging the endless war for existence, man survives only by the stoutness of his heart and the strength of his body. The battle is to the strong. The wind bites, the cold pierces, the way of the trail is arduous and he who falters is doomed. It is a stark country, grim and unforgiving, merciless in its mandates and swift to punish.

AFAR up the trail a dark figure became visible, moving fast with long swinging tread, bending forward in the attitude of the practised walker. It was the first man, with strength flowing its full warm tide through his sinewy frame. His eyes were bright and he thought not at all of what had been, but of a log cabin farther down the river where a lamp would be burning in the window beneath the laden roof. Quickly he came, till, opposite the shoes, he stopped abruptly and stared down at the torn pack-sack. As he stared it seemed that very faintly there issued from the snow itself a fine intermittent vapor. With an exclamation he twisted his feet free and began to dig.

Ten minutes later he was working desperately over a stiff body stretched beside a blazing fire. His methods were harsh but efficacious. The breath began to reinhabit the lungs it had so nearly deserted. Presently the blind man sighed deeply and a quiver ran through his frame. At that the rescuer redoubled his efforts, and lifting the slack shoulders, put a steaming cup to the blue lips.

"Hard luck," he said, "drink this."

They started an hour afterward, the rescuer in the lead. Behind him and grasping the end of a rawhide tump-line came the saved—walking uncertainly, with weak knees and wavering feet. The man in front was carrying both pack-sacks, which loomed up mountainously in the pale white light. He stopped now and again with a word of encouragement, asking no questions, but his brain worked for them both.

At the second bend of the river he

stopped. The blind man heard and halted at once, his ears accomplishing a double duty. The rescuer peered at the river where it seemed something was moving, mysteriously uncouth. He slung his Winchester forward and felt for the trigger, then with a grunt, let the weapon lie loose in his arm.

Two hundred yards away a man was floundering in the snow, his arms waving despairingly. He was nearly spent, falling often and rising to his feet, plastered with white—half engulfed in the sparkling sea around him. He tried to shout, but could make only a half choked inarticulate sound more beast-like than human. On he came, wallowing toward the trail. The first man stood, till suddenly the truth was clear and he stepped swiftly forward. A moment later the stranger pitched on his face and lay still.

An hour passed—the blind man heard one voice, then two, the second being weak and almost incoherent. He caught words of encouragement, smelt a fire, and moved on as close as he dared. He was too far gone to talk himself, but knew that mercy walked abroad that night in the barren lands. After a while some one spoke to him in tones he knew.

"We'll start now. Stamp down as hard as you can—this fellow has no shoes."

The three got into motion, and the second man—the blind one—held thankfully on to the tump-line. He heard the shoes of the leader driven down on to the trail by legs of piston-like force and stamped weakly himself, numbly conscious that uncertain steps were following close behind. There was no talk, breath being too precious to consume in speech.

The last man mustered all his strength. His body savagely frost-bitten, felt as though burned by hot metal, his legs and thighs were wound with ribbons of pain. Snow was plastered on his face and in the small of his neck throbbed the one warning signal which the men of the north have learned to heed—the protest of a body that is about to revolt. He did not think much of his own distress, but of the one in front. that was hard luck.

The blind man pushed on with dwindling force. His closed eyes exuded a paste that froze on his wind-whipped cheeks. His very spine felt frozen. It was queer to be walking in the dark between two strangers. What sort of a time, he wondered, had the last man experienced. His own eyes would be better in a few days, but it was tough to be out in the woods without snow-shoes. His sympathy was moved at the very thought.

The first man walked slowly, modulating his pace to suit the others. He had noted the ghastly look on the features of the last one rescued, and the face stuck in his mind. It was tough to go through the ice in weather like this and tougher still to have to sacrifice one's shoes. He was glad he had never been caught like that. For the blind man he felt even more pity. It was worse to be helpless than to be half frozen. He spoke over his shoulder occasionally—watching to see that he was not going too fast. Presently, straight ahead, a spark of yellow light glowed through the dark of a clump of trees. He gave one great joyful shout.

For twelve hours the three lay motionless in bunks built one over the other. The first man was on top—the blind one at the bottom. The former awoke and blinked at the red hot stove, stuffed with blazing wood. The roar of it and the weight of blankets over him were both grateful. He lay for a little while smoking peacefully, then hearing movements beneath, put his head over the wooden side board and looked down.

"Hullo, pilgrim, how goes it?"

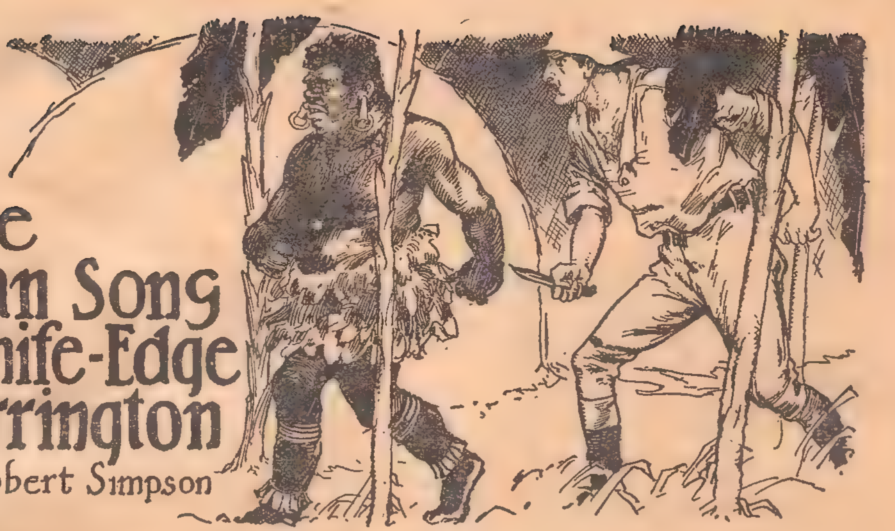
The third man grunted comfortably—"Fine."

Then he too leaned out and surveyed the occupant of the bottom bunk.

"How do you feel, partner?"

The blind man stretched a pair of mottled arms. His face was still plastered with the discharge from closed and swollen lids.

"Like a bull moose. Do I smell coffee?"



The Swan Song of Knife-Edge Harrington

by Robert Simpson

Author of "Up-Stream," "Taking Over Gettison," etc.

HARRINGTON lolled on the matted deck of an eight-paddle canoe somewhere between Warri and Segwanga and thought of diamonds.

As far as he knew, the only diamonds of any consequence in that part of the Niger Delta were on the fat, puffy fingers of Chief Motu's hands, and he was not thinking of those.

He saw the muddy brown river racing past—dirty, sullen and suggestive of much that was disagreeable.

And then the canoe boys swept their paddles through the water, raised them on high for the succeeding downward stroke and a shower of sparkling diamond-like drops spread out from the edge of the blade.

It was the same water. And when the scattering, glistening drops fell back into the creek again, their glory vanished instantly.

Harrington was a poet. He did not write verse. He was a poet inside his head, or within his massive chest, or wherever or whatever it is the soul inhabits.

Apart from that, he was generally conceded to be pretty much of a brute.

His heavy black mustache, deep-sunken, gray-green eyes and wavy, coal-black hair, coupled with his height and girth and the somewhat generous exposure of his hairy chest, gave him an appearance that would have lent itself readily to piracy on the high seas. Also, as if to supply an added touch of realism to the suggestion, he always carried a hunting-knife slung upon a hippo-hide thong that was tied about his waist.

He had been known to use the hippo thong only too frequently. But the knife had never left its sheath within the sight of any white man.

It had little or no connection with his sobriquet of Knife-Edge, although those who did not know him very well imagined it had. He was called Knife-Edge Harrington because any one who was careless enough to trifle with him, was almost sure to discover that he was as playful as the edge of a butcher knife and that the subsequent results were equally sharp and incisive.

Harrington was an old-timer; so old that most of his fellow Coasters were infants in comparison.

This did not mean that his years were hoary. Simply that he had begun early and lasted long.

Traveling from Mapassa, beyond Tarquah, on the Gold Coast, to the possession of an independent trading-factory on Holonga Creek, in the Segwanga district, had occupied something more than twenty years of Knife-Edge Harrington's life.

In that time he had seen much that was unlovely, assisted in the burial of many men who had been more worthy to live than he, teetered on the rim of complete dissolution

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"The Swan Song of Knife-Edge Harrington," copyright, 1922, by Robert Simpson.

more often than he had bothered to count and had done numerous things of which he should have been ashamed.

But it was not in the nature of Knife-Edge Harrington to know the meaning of regret. He lived a day till it was done, and every hour of the twenty-four was amply accounted for. Then he began anew upon another.

On this day he was on his way to Segwanga to answer the summons of Daniel Dane Parker, the district commissioner there, in the matter of the illicit sale of a Lee-Enfield rifle and some ammunition to a native whose name was Bekali.

Apparently Bekali was one of the numerous younger brothers of Chief Motu of Segwanga, and it further appeared that the rifle in question had exploded so completely that Bekali had become immediately defunct.

This introduced complications. More particularly since Bekali had been pointing the muzzle of the rifle at the broad of Daniel Dane Parker's back when the accident occurred!

Knife-Edge Harrington was not at all sure of the why or the how of the rather ugly business, but he did know that the rifle had been his, that he had sold it in violation of the law and that he would have to lie like an Accra cook to remain free to continue in business.

If he were proved guilty of the charge, the least he could expect would be permanent removal from Nigeria, which would thereupon automatically extend from Sierra Leone to Old Calabar.

His sea-green eyes seemed to sink deeper and deeper in their sockets, and his expression became dreamy and filled with possibilities. But as a matter of fact he thought of the law but little.

The momentary metamorphoses of the muddy waters of Holonga Creek into diamonds was infinitely more interesting than the perspiring, humdrum processes of government in a swamp.

SOMETHING less than an hour later Harrington towered upon the "unofficial" side of Daniel Dane Parker's desk on the ground floor of the Segwanga consulate and asked facetiously for a bill of particulars.

Parker—known familiarly as "The Great Dane"—was in no mood that morning for humor. He had quarreled with the breakfast eggs which were of as doubtful temper as he, and he had a slight fever—just enough to warn him that if a treble dose of quinin did not serve to allay it he would have to spend three or four precious days in bed sweating it out.

"Sit down, Harrington," he invited, and waved his "guest" to a chair on the right of the desk. "I'm in a rotten humor, and you're in a bad mess. So we may be able to commiserate with each other. You know what you're here for?"

"Something about a gun, isn't it?"

"It's a little more than that," Parker admitted, and explained without troubling with too much detail. "I was tramping in from Akerri two days ago with Gaunt of the P. W. D. (Public Works Department). Just past the bush path leading to Chief Motu's juju hut, Gaunt happened to hear the cracking of a twig—or something like that—turned his head quickly and saw the muzzle of a rifle sticking out of the bush. He yelled to me, grabbed my arm, and then came an explosion. After a half-minute or so Gaunt and I went back to investigate and found a body but very little face. So much for that.

"The rifle, or what was left of it, was a Lee-Enfield. The native, who was identified later, was Bekali. He belonged to Chief Motu's family, and the chief says you sold the deceased that rifle. What was the matter with it?"

Harrington shook his head. His eyes told nothing at all. It was a simple, guileless trap—just a little too simple for him.

"Don't know. Never saw it. Where's Motu?"

Several native chieftains of more or less degree hovered in the numerous doorways of the district commissioner's office waiting, with a smirk or an owlish stare, for an audience. Parker looked them all over lazily before he pretended even to hear what Harrington had said.

A Sierra Leonese clerk, resplendent in white flannels and a four-in-hand tie that screeched more loudly than the parrot in the treasurer's office, came simpering in with a report of some sort from the R. N. R. chief of the transport department.

Parker glanced at the report, nodded dismissal to the clerk, and then, speaking without heat or malice, he said definitely:

"I know you're lying, Harrington. But

I expect you to do that, so it doesn't matter very much."

The Great Dane smiled, gave Harrington ample time to protest, and went on simply and conversationally:

"Apparently the rifle you sold to Bekali was defective enough to prevent the destruction of Gaunt or myself or both of us, so that it was really instrumental in removing a potential murderer and saving my successor the necessity of hanging him. But in knowingly selling a rifle that was likely to do what that one did, you are in considerable danger of being responsible for Bekali's death. Savvy?"

Harrington threw his head far back and laughed thunderously out of the deeps of his chest. Actually he was beginning to feel irritated.

He knew that Chief Motu—fat, greasy, suave and imperturbable—was moving heaven and earth in an effort to make some one—preferably a white man—pay for Bekali's fatal mistake. And Parker's method of questioning was exasperatingly on the side of Motu's heart's desire.

"Why don't you take me out to the nearest mango-tree and hold a hangin'-bee?" Harrington asked with an ugly twisted grin. "Motu would enjoy it, and if you invited my competitors they'd open a small bottle or two just to convince themselves they were celebrating."

"Still, you see where you stand?" Parker queried mildly. "If you knew that rifle was defective when you sold it——"

"Never saw it. Didn't sell it. Let me talk to Motu and see what happens."

"You won't tell me what was the matter with that gun?"

Harrington's eyes narrowed.

"You're taking a lot for granted, aren't you?"

"Nothing."

"What do you mean? Aren't you taking it for granted that I sold the —— thing—that I knew it was defective?"

"No. I know you sold it. I don't know you knew it was defective. If you did—well, I explained what that meant."

Harrington looked around the office and out through the open doorways toward the wharf where a stern-wheeler was loading up for a trip to Asaba and Onitsha.

Loitering between the commissioner's office and Marsden's trading-beach, the usual little groups of native hangers-on loafed in the sun's blinding glare, chattering incessantly while they awaited the pleasure of the commissioner or his various aides. But Chief Motu was not among them.

Harrington rose suddenly. For a moment Parker, who was of a stature generally described as magnificent, thought Knife-Edge was going to be violent. Instead he merely said abruptly—

"I've got to get back to Holonga."

"Of course you have. But I wish you would tell me what was the matter with that rifle before you go."

"—— Haven't I told you——"

"Sh! I'm rather careful about the morals of my young colored gentlemen," Parker said softly. "And what's the use of bluffing anyway? The only point to be decided is whether or not you knew the gun would explode when you sold it. Did you?"

Harrington's heavy brows lowered, and his eyes became sunken, dully glowing pools. His shoulders hunched forward a little, and his thumbs ran slowly along the inside of the hippo-hide thong about his waist. Just then he looked capable of anything. Parker smiled.

"Better get back to Holonga before you commit yourself," he advised simply. "You look too anxious to get yourself into more trouble."

Then sharply and suddenly without stirring an inch—

"Get out!"

Knife-Edge was startled. His thumbs stopped moving back and forth along the hippo-hide thong, and his jaw sagged. The suddenness of Parker's change of front had all the effect of an attack from the rear. He did not know which way to jump, and his grin of bravado was an ugly and a sickly thing.

"Oh, all right. If you're going to get ratty, I'd better edge. You'll let me know when you want me again?"

The final sentence was intended to be sarcastic. Segwanga did not have jail accommodations for white men. They had to be taken to the barracks at Warri, and evidently the Great Dane did not feel justified or think it necessary to take that step with Harrington yet.

He ignored Knife-Edge's query and called for a clerk. Harrington hovered hesitatingly in one of the doorways that led down to the wharf.

"Find Ortali for me and send him here,"

Parker ordered the colored clerk who answered his summons.

Harrington stiffened, drew his breath sharply, and reached Parker's desk almost in a single stride.

"If you put that withered old swine on my beach I'll send him back to you in a loin-cloth!"

Parker laughed. Harrington's fearsome rage seemed actually to amuse him. He rose leisurely from his chair still smiling and shooed the few gaping spectators out of the doorways with a casual wave of his arm.

"You're talking rubbish," he said to Knife-Edge in a matter-of-fact tone. "Ortali is a fine old gentleman, and you're making a nuisance of yourself."

"You mean you're going to put that mummy on my beach to watch me!"

"Why not?"

Followed a string of oaths, a staccato order from Parker, the sudden swish of a hurtling arm, the ugly impact of bone on bone, a throaty gasp and then the crashing of a heavy body against a low-hanging picture of Lokoja upon the wall.

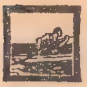
The Great Dane sat upon a corner of his desk with a service revolver resting comfortably on his knee.

Harrington leaned a little dazedly against the opposite wall, waiting for his equilibrium to come back to him. The whites of many eyes showed inquisitively all about them.

"You swing far too wide," Parker told Knife-Edge confidingly. "Short, straight and to the point is much better."

Harrington straightened slowly. His great hands hung listlessly by his side, but there was a raging hell inside of him. No man had ever hit him like that and talked so carelessly about it afterward.

He looked around him in heavy inquiry, observed the revolver that rested with such casual significance upon Parker's knee; then without so much as a glance at the commissioner himself he slouched out of the office and down the concrete path leading to the wharf and his canoe.



ORTALI wore the blue uniform of the police.

His skinny, naked legs stuck out of one end of it, his withered little head out of the other.

Old Doc Carney, mostly of Warri but sometimes of Segwanga, had been heard to say that Ortali's beady, black eyes were the most alive things he had ever seen in the Niger country. The rest of him had dried up and died many years before.

In a one-woman canoe he slipped alongside Knife-Edge Harrington's ragged mangrove-stick breakwater the following morning before sunrise.

Harrington's solitary white assistant, whose name was Grain, saw him sitting on the edge of the oil-wharf when the beach-watch boy rang four bells. On the point of opening the kernel-store to accommodate the few kernel-traders who waited at the breakwater, Grain drew his key out of the padlock and walked over to interview the unusual visitor.

Grain was not good to look upon. He had red eyes and a low-hanging under lip. His head was too small for his squat body, and his sense of humor was crude and upon occasions unbelievably primitive. He disliked the presence of Ortali almost as much as he feared and respected Daniel Dane Parker, the district commissioner.

"What's matter?" he asked when he reached Ortali's side. "Some man be t'ief for dis beach?"

Ortali glanced up at Grain, and his little eyes twinkled like tiny lights in the midst of an age-black dark. Then without any comment he looked out across the creek again toward the mud-and-thatch village of Holonga, which appeared to loiter stragglingly down to the edge of the creek out of the bush beyond. He made no answer.

In his rage Grain almost forgot that Ortali was wearing the uniform of the police. But a loud bellow behind him helped him to remember, and he reached the kernel-store again by a circuitous route, moving sidewise out of Harrington's path, and watching him warily with fearful intentness every step of the way.

It would not have been the first time Grain's back had felt the sting that lay in the hippo-hide thong about Harrington's waist.

And Knife-Edge was plainly in a dangerous humor. As he stalked across the beach and on to the oil-wharf his brows were black with anger and the cords of his neck were taut. It was difficult to tell whether he had any eyes at all.

In the Delta it was not considered good form for a white man to be compelled to live under the official surveillance of a native policeman. Parallels to Harrington's case would have been hard to find and Harrington knew it.

It told him how far he had fallen better than anything else could have done, and he did not like or want to believe it. Therefore he towered above Ortali's shrunken little figure as if he were quite capable of tearing him apart and throwing the pieces into the river.

"Get off my beach!" he yelled thunderously.

Ortali turned his head and looked up.

It was a very small face that Knife-Edge was soundlessly invited to strike if he wanted to; wizened and old and seamed with more wrinkles than there were creeks in the Delta. The skin was as dead as that of any mummy, and the trifling little body seemed to dangle from the shriveled neck like an empty balloon from a string.

Harrington knew in the very first minute that he could not strike *that!*

Evidently Ortali knew it, too. After he had watched the fearsome looking white man open his mouth and shut it again several times in a futile search for words that would adequately fit the situation, he said in his squeaky little voice:

"Be gun palaver. Bekali done die. Motu say you kill him. You savvy what's matter them gun shoot Bekali face out?"

Knife-Edge receded a step. The question—a toneless, pidgin-English repetition of that which Parker had so irritatingly persisted in asking—was like the flick of a whip-lash.

"Who told you to say that?" he rasped; then, because Ortali did not understand, he put the question even more threateningly into pidgin.

Ortali's answer was a loose shake of the head.

"Be gun palaver," he squeaked mechanically. "Bekali done die. Motu say you kill him. You savvy what's matter them gun shoot Bekali face out?"

"—— you!"

Knife-Edge almost kicked Ortali off the wharf, and there was excited jabberings to right and left of him that anticipated that very procedure.

However, with a tremendous effort he restrained his mosquito-booted foot in time, and backed away a few more steps swallowing hard.

Slowly, but with a deadening sense of futility, Knife-Edge realized the situation was impossible. He could not kick that. He could not pick "it" up and throw "it" into the creek; and threats, judging by Ortali's unwinking calm, were useless.

Harrington's mind jolted to a full stop, and the effect jarred him from head to heel. Feeling something like a fish out of water, he swung suddenly about and strode "on top" to the living-quarters above the shop.

And in his own meager and slovenly furnished rooms, which exemplified the hit-and-miss character of the beach in general, he tried to meet the issue squarely in the face and found himself confronted with an *impasse.*

If he were to claim that the Lee-Enfield he had sold to Bekali had been in perfect order when sold, he would thereby admit that he had sold it, and be fined and put out of business and the country for his pains.

And apparently if he were to continue to profess ignorance of the whole matter Ortali would continue to perch on his oil-wharf and ask squeakingly every time he went near—

"You savvy what's matter them gun shoot Bekali face out?"

Obviously something had to be done about it. Not the usual thing; something different from anything Knife-Edge had been compelled to devise before. Because, he had not forgotten the climax to his most recent interview with Daniel Dane Parker.

The presence of Ortali on the oil-wharf was just such another blow. Parker had struck again, and again Harrington could not strike back.

He could not kick Ortali off the oil-wharf any more feasibly than he could walk into Parker's office at Segwanga and demand the "mummy's" removal at the point of a gun.

Another policeman would have been different, but Ortali——

Doubtless the Great Dane had thought of that.

Presently, after a drink or two had been called upon to clarify the situation, Harrington barked to a beach-boy to send Ortali up to him.

Ortali came in his own shufflng, unhurried way, and Harrington met him impatiently at the head of the stairs.

"You go live for my oil-wharf all time?" he asked resentfully. "Trade neber come dere, if you sit down for dat place all time."

"Be gun palaver," Ortali said as if he

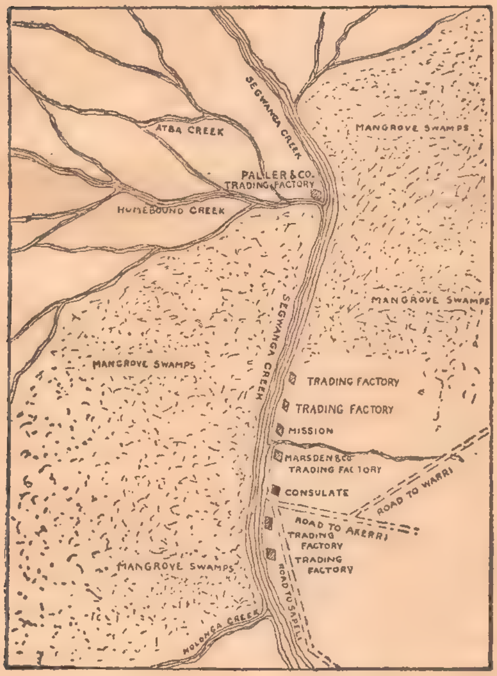
were wound up. "Bekali done die. Motu say you kill him. You savvy——"

Knife-Edge choked on a roar of rage, and his huge hands reached out as if to throw his mosquito-like tormentor down-stairs. But the moment his fingers touched Ortali's skinny, unmoving shoulders, Harrington straightened up with a jerk and stood visibly shaking, utterly incapable of encompassing the problem.

"You savvy what's matter them gun shoot Bekali face out?"

Knife-Edge walked away. He went back to his office drawing deep breaths into his lungs, and Ortali slowly returned to his perch on the oil-wharf.

He was there at noon, apparently oblivious to the blazing heat of the sun; and he was still there when the dark came down.



Knife-Edge did not leave his rooms all day. He drank much and made the house-boys' lives even more interesting for them than usual. Grain, his assistant, walked on tiptoe when he came up from the beach, and hour by hour a funeral quiet settled down upon the place; a quiet that was broken only by Harrington's spasmodic exhibitions of anger and violence.

Then, about eight o'clock in the evening Harrington ordered out his eight-paddle canoe and made his way to the native village of Segwanga, from which the white settlement took its name.

There was a deliberation about Knife-Edge's movements that did not promise Chief Motu of Segwanga a comfortable night's rest.

Ortali remained on the oil-wharf.

CHIEF MOTU was as fat as Ortali was shrunken, a greasy obesity that glowed with unctuous self-satisfaction.

His house, no longer a place of mud and thatch, was built, white-man fashion, of pitch pine and corrugated-iron. The lower half was a storeroom and had a concrete floor; the upper was Motu's residence, also fashioned, room for room, after a trading-beach pattern.

Motu did not squat upon his haunches about a chop pot when it came time to eat. He sat at a table in his dining-room and used a knife and fork. And unless he was in a particularly gracious humor or had visitors he ate alone.

All about him the native village of Segwanga was still as it had always been; mud or wattle and thatch and smell; the squalid habitation of a thousand souls who walked like men, yet crawled through a sun-flayed, rain-beaten, filth-and-fever life at the mercy of the spirits of their dead and the impulses of Chief Motu, who, in spite of his fat, was excessively alive.

He expected Harrington; had been expecting him all day. Therefore he was not at all surprized to see him, although he pretended to be outraged when Knife-Edge made his appearance on his small veranda.

"What's matter!" he demanded, struggling indignantly out of the tight fit of a Madeira chair. "I no want to talk gun palaver. Bekali done die. Be you kill him. Them gun you sell no good."

Harrington laughed. There was nothing pleasant about it. His gray-green eyes had a flickering, haunting recklessness in them that took no thought of place or numbers.

"You're a liar," he said in plain English. "And you know you're a liar."

"I no savvy. I no want to talk——"

"Shut up! Suppose it be true that I kill Bekali, I kill Motu, too. Savvy?"

"Cha!"

Harrington unceremoniously pushed the chief and his astonishment back into the chair with broad palm of his left hand, while his right fumbled casually inside his loose-fitting shirt in the vicinity of his left armpit.

In a moment, with all the precision of automatons, several shadowy figures appeared from the stairs and from the rooms beyond the veranda.

They did not rush at once; and while Motu drew a deep breath and tried to fit into the chair more comfortably Knife-Edge searched with his shoulders for a veranda upright. Finding one, he leaned against it, studying the nearest of the fat chief's body-guard out of the corners of his eyes.

Every man of them carried a machete; and there were at least three times as many of them as Harrington, big and capable as he was, could have tackled single-handed.

The fact did not seem to disturb or surprize him, however. His leering contempt for Motu's exhibition of power and preparedness was in striking contrast to his gaping impotence in the presence of Ortali. His right hand continued to linger inside his shirt.

"What's matter monkey come?" he asked, indicating the silent, menacing shadows with the machetes. "You fear?"

Motu drew another sharp breath and swallowed the insult with some difficulty.

"You kill Bekali," he accused heavily. "You fit to kill me."

Harrington nodded agreeably.

"If Motu talk lie I go kill him plenty too quick."

The chief shrugged his shoulders, settled himself deeper in the chair, glanced about him and was satisfied. White men, as he knew, were strong of mouth when they wanted to frighten the black man. But this time——

"Motu never talk lie," he declared virtuously. "All same I say you kill Bekali, that be true talk. Be you kill him. Them gun you sell no good."

Harrington's right hand, still inside his shirt, stirred restlessly.

"How you savvy gun no good?" he asked, edging a step nearer.

"It shoot Bekali face out."

"What's matter Bekali try to shoot Parker?"

"I no savvy. Dat be Bekali palaver. He dead. Be you kill him. Gun no good."

Then Harrington was sure that Bekali's death lay at Motu's door, or very near to it. Also that in all probability Motu had had much to do with the attempt upon Daniel Dane Parker's life. The chief was far too anxious to "talk true" to be innocent of complicity in the matter.

Whether Parker would see it in that light was another question; and for the first time in many years Knife-Edge had a twinge of loneliness. As a general thing he did not mind being outside the pale of Segwanga's polite society, but he did not like to think that the word of a ponderous, greasy liar like Motu was enough to put a period upon his West African career.

"We go commissioner," he said simply. "You and me. One time. Make quick."

Motu laughed at him. His fat shook, and his lazy, cruel little eyes ridiculed Harrington as words could never have done.

Then he stopped laughing. His mouth gaped; the whites of his eyes revolved sharply in fear.

But Harrington paid no attention to that. His right hand was no longer inside his shirt. It was held stiffly at his side, just a little above the hip, and, although Motu had seen many of the white man's guns, he had never seen a revolver as big as that one. He looked into the yawning muzzle of it as into the mouth of a pit.

The guarding shadows behind him and those that hovered about the stairs drew a quick, hissing breath of surprize and awe. No one moved.

For a moment or two there was a gasping silence, and Harrington saw to it that he was the first to take the initiative. In a stride he was at Motu's shoulder, and there was a glint of glittering steel in the lamplight. The point of a long, thin blade held in Harrington's left hand pricked Motu's fat, rolling neck just over the jugular.

"Up!"

The word was low, but as sharply insistent as the point of the knife.

"We go commissioner. Tell all men go 'way. If any man make palaver, Motu die all same little pig. *Wah!*"

Motu's fat shook again, but not with laughter. He had no desire to die like a pig, and while he tried to gain control of his body he hoped that none of his henchmen would make any effort to rescue him.

"Talk!" Harrington ordered, and the point of the knife drew a spot of blood.

Motu squeaked a hurried order to his body-guard, and there followed the reluctant scuffing of naked feet as the menacing shadows drifted off into the dark beyond the lamplight.

"Up!"

Motu wrenched himself out of the chair, and stood, like a mountain of quivering jelly, waiting for Harrington's next order. He knew that, in spite of being surrounded on all sides by his own people, he was completely at the big and terrible white man's mercy.

There were guns in the village of Segwanga, it was true; guns that, as Knife-Edge well knew, had no business to be there. But as long as Harrington remained as close to Motu as he was doing then, no one was likely to use any of those guns in an effort to release the ponderous chief from his temporary captivity.

And Knife-Edge knew the village too well to be tricked out of his strategic position by any subterfuge on the way to his canoe.

Motu, therefore, did exactly as he was told; reluctantly and in voluble protest perhaps; but though the line of march to Harrington's canoe was fringed with an invisible awe and punctuated by staccato whisperings that came out of the darkened huts of the village something like the sputter of escaping steam, there was no further demonstration.

Harrington almost literally hung himself around Motu's neck, shifting this way and that, a constantly moving target that made his bulky prisoner much more easy to hit than he.

Motu took his place in Knife-Edge's canoe, filling the air with wailings and threats that continued intermittently all the way to the consulate.

Harrington laughed at him as he put the long, lean blade back into his sheath.

"Methinks ye do protest too much," he said while Motu stopped to get his breath. "Keep it for the D. C. He's a friend of yours."

DANIEL DANE PARKER admitted afterward that the appearance of Knife-Edge Harrington herding Chief Motu up the consulate stairs with the assistance of a "forty-five" startled him somewhat.

As a rule, this kind of thing was not done. But the Great Dane had learned that it was not worth while to be surprized at anything. So he permitted the invasion of his privacy almost without remark.

"Better put that blunderbuss away," he suggested mildly to Harrington as he closed his sitting-room door and shut out a few gaping houseboys, "unless you intend to hold me up. What did you bring your fat friend here for?"

Knife-Edge put the revolver away. He stood eying Parker with an ugly, twisted grin that had no respect for authority. Both of them ignored Motu's sputtering indignation.

"I brought him here because he's a liar and a friend of yours," Knife-Edge said pointedly. "And because you posted that mummy on my beach to kill my trade."

"No. Not to kill it, Harrington. Simply to induce it to be decent."

"Decent! Do you think I can do any kind of business with that bit of bone in a uniform sitting on my oil-wharf!"

"What's Motu got to do with that?"

Harrington's brows darkened.

"Don't try to be clever. You posted Ortali on my beach because of what this lump of fat told you. Didn't you?"

"Partly that. He says you killed Bekali by selling him a gun that was no good."

"And I say he's a liar. More than that, I'll stake my life he put Bekali up to the job of potting you!"

"Really?"

Parker's mildness was most exasperating.

"What makes you think that?"

"He's too anxious to blame me for it, and I'm here to get the thing settled once and for all. I might as well shut up shop now as try to do business with Ortali hanging around my beach all the time."

"Um—something in that. Might be a good idea. Suppose you do it."

"Eh? Do what?"

"Shut up shop."

Parker turned abruptly from Harrington's sagging-jawed amaze to Motu, who was trying desperately to get a word in.

"Well, what's matter?"

"He kill Bekali! Them gun he sell no good! He go kill me! He come to my house and take me 'way. He go kill me! I fear him plenty too much!"

"All right," Parker said soothingly. "We go fix."

"Fix!" Harrington bellowed, beside himself with passion. "You mean you'll take this black swine's word and kick me out on the strength of it!"

"I haven't used my feet—yet," Parker reminded him quietly. "Simply made a suggestion. Of course, if you insist——"

Knife-Edge's head jerked upward. His eyes burned a moment, then glazed dull and appeared to vanish completely in the black shadow of his bushy eyebrows. His right hand moved toward his chest where his shirt flapped open—then stopped. His left fell convulsively away from the hilt of the knife at his waist.

He had asked for a final settlement and he had got it. And there was something in the Great Dane's sublime self-control that baffled him; something that hinted a trap of some sort. Also, when Harrington glanced at Motu out of the corners of his eyes, he knew that he must preserve his freedom long enough to settle accounts with the chief.

"So it's all fixed, eh?" he said, one shoulder dropping in an attitude of careless contempt. "Motu gets a prize for trying to blow your head off, and I get the boot on his say-so? You're a great commissioner. How long do I get to sell out?"

"Next steamer," Parker informed him placidly.

"Next ——. That's only five days!"

"I'm sorry."

"Sorry! You're——"

"Sorry it isn't tomorrow," Parker interjected mildly. "You really ought to go to jail for at least twenty years."

Harrington laughed harshly.

"Now you're trying to be funny again. What have you got against me that you can prove? Nothing but the word of a fat and greasy Jakri man who'll blow the roof off your ruddy consulate one of these dark nights if you don't look out."

It was Parker's time to laugh.

"All right. You won't be here to see it."

Knife-Edge's great hands crooked, his arms stiffened so that the muscles of the forearms stood out like cords and his whole body was arched as if he would spring at Parker's throat any moment. In the lamplight all that the Great Dane could see of his eyes were sharp, glinting flashes of light.

Motu huddled as far away as possible. The large diamonds that glittered on his puffy fingers were the most obvious things about him when he threw his hands out in a supplicating gesture and whimpered, as he had been doing at intervals ever since he had arrived:

"He kill Bekali. I fear him plenty too much. He go kill me!"

Harrington heard the wheedling, whining voice of the chief distinctly enough. But his attention was too much taken up with Parker to give much heed to Motu—then. Somewhere in the dim recesses of his consciousness Knife-Edge knew that the district commissioner was not in the least afraid of him in spite of his display of weapons.

Also, whether he liked it or not, he was equally conscious of the galling circumstance that he was just a little afraid of the commissioner. Just enough to make him hesitate and, because of that, to encourage him to be more venomous than ever.

"You're a great commissioner, you are," he said again sneeringly. "You're a white man! You'll chuck me out and let this fat thief play merry *Hamlet* right on your doorstep without so much as a flick of a hippo-hide! All right. You can go to ——!"

He laughed, jerked his head in Motu's direction and added significantly—

"He'll see that you do."

"Wait a minute."

Harrington stopped in the doorway and looked back.

"Well?"

"You forgot to say good night."

KNIFE-EDGE found himself at the waterside shaking as with a fever. A murderous rage tore at his vitals and consumed every drachm of his energy. It had an acute tendency to smother caution and make the satisfaction of the moment the one tremendous thing worth living for.

But as he stood beside his canoe, trying to control his immediate desire for an adequate revenge, he saw the district commissioner escorting Motu down to the consulate wharf to send him home in a launch.

Then the wrath of Knife-Edge Harrington suddenly assumed the temperature of a block of ice.

The change was by no means for the better. After that, even the sight of the unmoving shadow of Ortali on his oil-wharf did not fluster him or make him alter his course in the slightest.

It was a perilous course, too, as perilous as it was in some respects diabolical. He perfected the somewhat confused details of it on the way back to Holonga, and, having arrived there, lost no time in putting it into execution.

Two rifles and an extravagant number of rounds of ammunition formed the first step apparently.

The second was a carefully penned note to Daniel Dane Parker, which was dispatched by a Kroo-boy post haste; the third, about two hours later, was the unusual spectacle of Harrington himself paddling off in a small canoe, accompanied only by his villainous head man.

Ortali observed the departure, but it was not a part of his duty to follow. He had, without stirring from Knife-Edge's oil-wharf, done more than even the Great Dane had expected.

CHIEF MOTU of Segwanga sat upon the veranda of his white man's house and cursed the Government. This was not unusual. He kept the expletives strictly to himself, however, and whispered to the gods of his fathers that the death of Bekali should not go unavenged.

It was wrong that a white man's gun should shoot backward; more particularly at a time when it had been most necessary for the bullet to go the other way.

Motu was sure that Harrington was responsible for it. Therefore, Harrington should die. And if the white man's Government would not do the killing——

The fat chief thought heavily of ways and means. It never occurred to him to think of Bekali's love affairs or of a breech-bolt that had been purposely tampered with. These circumstances were merely incidental in any case. They had precipitated the deluge, but had no effect whatever upon the climax.

So Motu sat with half-closed eyes and considered the manner of Knife-Edge Harrington's demise with the precise attitude of one who was particular about the niceties of the proceeding.

In the midst of these pleasurable cogitations he heard the sharp crackle of rifle-fire and the most unpleasant thump of bullets upon his corrugated-iron roof. He was lifted—and the chair with him—out of reverie into immediate action of a frenzied sort.

"Yoruba come!" he squeaked to his invisible attendants, referring to the little brown native soldiers who were housed in the Segwanga barracks.

And when he had separated himself from the chair to the accompaniment of the second fusilade that came from the bush to the left of the village, the third, fourth, fifth and sixth reports followed in such rapid succession that Motu barely had an opportunity to waddle the length of his veranda to the stairs.

Instantly the village of Segwanga was wide awake. Its mud-and-wattle huts disgorged its loin-clothed population in a very few minutes. Scattered hurricane lamps that bobbed blearily into view revealed a shadowy confusion that immediately took voice in a screeching fear.

Motu scuffed back and forth on his veranda, hurling orders all about him, his voice growing hoarser and weaker every moment, his shiny black face losing its glistening self-satisfaction in a dull ash gray.

And when a shot found a pane of glass in the window of Motu's "reception-room" the fat chief dropped to his knees behind his veranda rail and yelled frantically for a rifle.

The firing from the rear continued. How much damage it was doing no one was prepared to say or to investigate. But in simple self-defense—because one can not argue with bullets in the dark—the guns that were secreted in the village of Segwanga came forth one by one, and presently these guns began to pour a spasmodic fire into the bush.

Knife-Edge Harrington, huddling behind a tree that afforded shelter enough for safety at the moment, grinned widely.

He heard the zip and the chug and whistle of the scattering bullets tearing their way through the mangroves and the underbrush, but that served only to increase his joy.

He flung a few more shots in the general direction of the upper floor of Motu's corrugated-iron dwelling to encourage more of the chief's guns to get into action.

His Kroo-boy headman, crouching almost at his feet, handed him the other rifle immediately, and Knife-Edge, spotting another convenient tree, ran for it, firing haphazard the while and without any apparent desire to hit anything in particular.

This rather weird kind of warfare continued, with a prodigal waste of ammunition for several minutes, until Segwanga, thrown into more and more confusion with every passing second, naturally divided itself into two factions—those who had white man's guns and those who had not.

The latter literally bolted for their canoes and the open waters of the creek. The others remained because Motu, believing himself discovered in the possession of unlawful weapons, knew that there was little hope of escape by land or water, and that there was nothing left for him to do but fight.

Knife-Edge waited a few minutes longer. Then his bullets began to pockmark Segwanga's huts as he shifted his position slowly but surely in the direction of the bush path that led out to the broad Sapeli road, or, as the case might be, straight into the heart of the village.

He did not expect to be able to fool Motu for very long, but he thought it would be long enough to give Daniel Dane Parker an opportunity to answer his letter. If Parker refused to answer——

Harrington swore at a bullet that tore at the sleeve of his shirt, and snapped three shots in rapid succession in the general direction from which it had come. A yell echoed the final report, and then his Krooboy headman caught sharply at his arm.

"Jakri man come," he whispered, his lips close to Harrington's ear. "On him belly. Dere!"

Harrington spun about and fired in the direction indicated without bothering to listen or investigate. He could see nothing, and he was quite sure that the bush was too thick for any one to see him.

"Go get him," he whispered to the Krooboy since there was no sound to indicate that he had hit anything that lived. "I take two gun. Matchet be all right for you."

The Kroo-boy nodded and slithered noiselessly away.

Harrington pumped several more bullets into the village, rapidly loading both rifles again as he listened to the whine and the rip of the uneven answering fire, and then slipped quietly toward the bush path.

If Parker was not a fool——

A fearful, blood-chilling yell leaped above the chaos of all other sounds for the fraction of a second. It was drowned with equal and appalling suddenness by a rattling, crackling volley that came distinctly from the bush on the opposite side of the village; a measured, soldierly effort about which there could be no mistake.

Chief Motu knew then that the Yoruba had surely come.

So did Harrington. He could also tell, as he listened to certain irregularities in the Yoruba fire, that the little brown men were in receipt of outside assistance; most of the Government officials and the white trading fraternity being present possibly.

And a minute or two later, when a similar concentrated volleying came from the direction of the creek, Harrington knew that the last stand of Motu of Segwanga had begun in real earnest.

Flinging a few more shots in the direction of the village, Knife-Edge contented himself by keeping a sharp watch on the bush round about, and in a little while a hoarse whisper came out of the dark at his right.

"I get him, sah. Yoruba soldier man come. We go?"

"You go. Take one gun. Wait in canoe. I go talk Motu little bit."

The Kroo-boy's grin of understanding was even more villainous than Harrington's. He drifted off into the eery, whimpering blackness, trailing one of his master's guns.

Knife-Edge slung the other over his shoulder and, moving very cautiously, began to skirt the edge of the bush path in the direction of the village.

Judging by the scarcity of bullets that came his way, he knew that Motu was being compelled to give all his attention to the creek and the opposite side of the bush.

The Yoruba on the creek had taken possession of the chief's breakwater with little more than a gesture and were now advancing through the jumbled streets of the village, on the front and left of the chief's corrugated-iron stronghold. Those in the bush to the right were swiftly executing a circling movement on the rear.

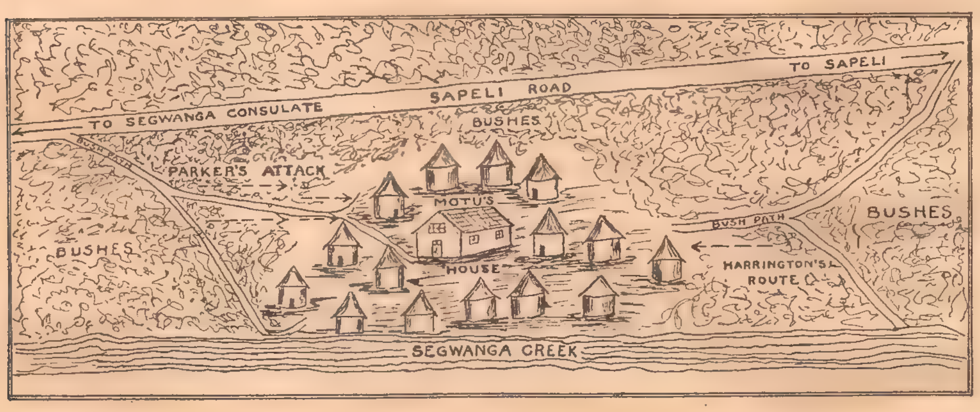
But Knife-Edge knew in what direction Motu would run if he ran at all. And he wanted to be there to meet him.

Simply for effect, and to discover how Motu's boys were circulated, he emptied his forty-five into the heart of the excitement, hugged the shelter of a tree, loaded up again and waited for results.

Only a few shots spattered indifferently in his direction, and they had a hint of nervousness behind them that told its own story. The raging press and fury of the fight in the opposite direction and down toward the creek obliterated everything else.

Knife-Edge reached the outer fringe of mud huts standing almost straight up. He wasted but little time or thought upon the flaring, screaming character of the hell he had loosed. With a twisting lunge he dived for the shadow of the nearest hut, crept carefully around it and, peering into the smoke-wreathed murk, slipped noiselessly on to the next one.

The vicious spit of Yoruba rifles, creeping up and up from the creek, was much nearer now, and the attack from the right and rear had evidently developed into a close-quarters affair in spots. But in his direction he appeared to be quite alone.



So he moved a little nearer, twisting this way and that, under cover of the deserted huts, until he came to one that, he was sure, marked Motu's only line of retreat.

There he stopped and, having listened a little while, became convinced that the hut was empty. Slipping inside it, he took up a position at the window hole which commanded not only a convenient view of Motu's veranda, but also a comparatively clear vista of the "street" down which the chief would come.

Harrington was not afraid of standing in the track of a retreating army. This army in retreat would consist principally of Motu and possibly a few of his sons. The others, when the time came, would throw down their rifles, fall flat upon their faces and finally emerge from the holocaust in the shape of a new chain-gang.

Meantime Knife-Edge saw that Motu was nowhere visible upon his veranda. He also learned, in another few minutes, that the chief's house was on fire, lending a final lurid touch to the volcanic character of the fight.

Smoke and flame and ashes and blood, the acrid smell of powder and the fiercely incessant rifle-fire, the venomous screech of savage passion, and now and then above it all the mournful wailing of the women from the creek—these things disturbed Knife-Edge not at all.

This was the swan song of his Coast career.

It lifted its screaming notes into the black Delta night and tore its quiet asunder. And Harrington, with the ear of a master of symphony, listened for a single false note.

And heard one. It came from directly behind him, too, with a suddenness that made him jump. He whirled about, flattening himself against the wall of the hut for an age-long second, until the sound came again, and in greater volume this time.

Knife-Edge swore. But his profanity had no effect whatever. So, glancing out of the window, he groped his way to the corner in which the baby lay.

How it had come to be left behind was of no consequence then. It was there, hungry and squalling lustily for food. And the noise of it did not cease. Further, it threatened to spoil the peace of Harrington's whole evening and possibly his aim as well. Like any normal or abnormal man, he hated to hear a baby cry; particularly when it was in the same room with him.

"Sh! Don't cry. Mammy go creek. Come back little bit soon. Sh! Sh! What's matter? Belly hungry?"

The infant squalled a little louder. It was a man child, altogether naked, and too young to understand or to be fooled by

Harrington's cajoleries. This was feeding-time and it wanted to eat, wars or rumors of wars notwithstanding. The thunderous racket outside, if it had any significance at all, was simply a new form of competition.

Harrington sneaked to the window again and then to the door. But his attempt to bolt went no further than that. He went back to the baby's corner with a hangdog look upon his face and roughly tucked the youngster under his arm.

"Shut up! Mammy go creek," he said sourly; and the child, having almost immediately discovered that he had buttons on his shirt, tried to get one into his mouth.

For a moment, as Harrington moved on tiptoe to the window, there was peace. But apparently a shirt button was not the thing; and Knife-Edge ducked into the shadows once more to try to smother the wail of indignation that immediately vied with the raw fury that raged outside.

He tried promises and threats with equal futility. Then he deliberately put the infant back into its mat-covered corner and returned to his vigil by the window.

Motu's house was a flaming furnace; the Yoruba were drawing nearer and nearer to close in with a final rush, and in another minute or two, if Motu were coming his way at all——

Behind him the baby gave voice with all its lungs, and Harrington shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. Why the —— did not Motu come!

Knife-Edge gripped his huge revolver a little tighter, cursed volubly under his breath, gritted his teeth and remained at the window only by the sheer exercise of his will. It was, in some respects, the hardest thing he ever did.

The man child in the corner was indeed a man, and its voice was the voice of many thunders. Harrington stopped one ear with a thick and calloused finger, reluctantly laid the revolver on the window-sill and stopped the other.

Motu appeared less than half a minute later.

He had brought several of his boys with him as a rear guard, and came crouching out of the smoke and the shadow, waddling in the shelter of a line of huts with his body-guard forming a semi-circular cluster about him.

Knife-Edge took his fingers out of his ears, snatched up his forty-five and fired as if he wanted to get it over with as quickly as possible before the yelling infant's voice had a real opportunity to affect his marksmanship.

The range was something less than thirty yards.

Motu just sagged at the knees and rolled over. His boys, wheeling sharply, saw him lying there, saw the spit of flame that came from Knife-Edge's window, saw one of their number spin round and hurtle forward on his shoulder——

Harrington, with a disgusted oath, went back to his nursing.

SOME time later, when it was all over, Daniel Dane Parker, accompanied by Hogmanay Sandy MacGregor of Marsden & Co., and some native soldiers who carried hurricane lamps, came upon the body of Motu and that of one of his boys.

Several rifles strewed the "street" as evidence of the surrender of their owners, a few of whom were discovered, cowering in fear, in some of the neighboring huts.

But what attracted Parker and his silent little search party most were the intermittent cries of a child. This sound led them direct to a hut from which there emanated the voice of a man—a white man who sang in a tuneless monotone:

"Oh, my Sal she am a maiden fair,
    Sing Polly-wolly-doodle all the day,
With curly eyes and laughing hair,
    Sing Polly-wolly-doodle all the day.

Fare thee well, fare thee well,
Fare thee well, my fairy——"

"Oh, shut up! Shut up!"

"For I'm goin' to Louisiana,
For to see my Susianna,
Sing Polly-wolly-doo——"

Harrington stopped short when a hurricane lantern showed suddenly at the window and Parker poked his head in at the door.

"Hello, Harrington. Didn't know you were a family man?"

"Family man, ——! If somebody doesn't find the mother of this brat, I'll drown it!"

Parker and Hogmanay Sandy MacGregor shook with smothered laughter. Even the Sphinx-faced, blood and dust smeared

Yoruba soldiers permitted themselves the luxury of a grin.

"Man, ye look awfu' natural," Hogmanay remarked seriously. "But ye shouldna sing. No, man, ye shouldna do that. Bairns are awfu' sensitive about music."

At a nod from Parker one of the Yoruba, who was the father of several children, relieved Knife-Edge of his squalling charge and immediately departed for the creek-side in search of the mother. Harrington breathed deeply as his arms dropped heavily to his sides.

"I got your letter," Parker declared simply. "Better get back to Holonga now, hadn't you?"

Harrington picked up his rifle slowly. It was poison in the cup for him to have to leave the scene of Motu's downfall like that—as if he were a small boy being ordered back to school.

"All right," he agreed roughly. "I'm going. See Motu out there?"

"We saw him. Evidently you made a complete job of it."

"Thanks. You are really awfully kind. Good night!"

PARKER and MacGregor and a captain of the Waffs (West African Field Force) tramped back to the consulate together. A trembling quiet reigned all about them. The village of Segwanga sobbed and wailed in sorrowful terror in their rear.

"What was that letter you were tellin' me about on the way up?" Hogmanay asked after a while.

"I'll show it to you," the Great Dane promised. "We had more than a suspicion that Motu had guns; but of course the only way to be sure of it in these confounded pest-holes is to hear them go off. Harrington helped wonderfully. I thought if I tried very hard I could make him angry enough to compel Motu to show his hand in some way or other. And it worked a charm."

"Splendidly," the captain of the Waffs conceded generously. "We'd have had a much worse mess on our hands if Motu had been allowed to play fast and loose much longer. What are you going to do to Harrington?"

"Nothing. The only evidence I ever had against him—and I'm afraid it would not have passed muster in court—is dead. I imagine he'll be good. For a little while anyway. He's the kind of man who is dangerous enough to be useful."

"Aye, that's no' impossible," the big, bearded Scotch trader admitted after he had thought it carefully over. "There's no sayin' what couldn't be done wi' a man who'll sing to a greetin' bairn wi' a voice like his—and expect it to stop."

Nevertheless, Knife-Edge's letter suggested that, tuneless as his voice might be, he had some kind of music inside of him.

MacGregor read it when they reached the consulate:

D. D. Parker, D. C.
Segwanga.

They say that the swan, just before it dies, gives voice in song. I have no intention to die just yet, but before you arrange my departure from these torrid shores to suit your own convenience, I am going to sing a farewell little ditty of my own.

It isn't polite, I understand, to tell the district commissioner just how many kinds of a ruddy idiot he is, but unfortunately that happens to be the first verse of my swan song. You can choose your own words.

Motu's town, to cut the rest of the verses short, is *full* of guns. I believe he's been collecting them from up-river somewhere for some time. Not that this is any of my business, but just because he's such a fat and unpleasant liar, I'm going after his hide tonight.

Perhaps I'll save your tin soldiers a job; perhaps not. Anyway if you will keep your ears open you will hear a nice tune that might help to wake you up and convince even a commissioner of your grade of intelligence that there *are* guns in Motu's town.

I don't expect you to believe this. But in case you do, I am going in, *via* the path from the Sapeli road, about two A.M. Harrington.

MacGregor considered the letter for a minute or two, then said heavily with a rueful glance at his tattered shirt and blood-spotted trousers:

"Aye. I'll admit it was a right nice tune he played for us. In better key, ye might say, than his 'Polly-wolly-doodle.' "

WHEN Harrington reached Holonga that night he did not find Ortali on the oil-wharf. Nor was the mummy visible as Knife-Edge sat on his veranda in sullen retrospection and watched the flaming sun leap brazenly out of the mangrove-shrouded dark.

On the other side of the creek the village of Holonga crawled into the state of wakefulness and on the beach below Grain opened the kernel-store as usual.

Harrington remained slouched in his chair solemnly contemplating the rainbow-like colors that sprang from the long amber-filled glass at his elbow.

Presently he drank long and deep, muttered unprintably under his breath, and finally decided to go to sleep.

When he awoke, he discovered a note which said briefly and unofficially:

> Thanks for the tip. You needn't go home on the next steamer unless you want to. Incidentally, I am not the only ruddy idiot in the world.
>
> PARKER, D. C.

Knife-Edge never did learn the exact meaning of the final sentence.

Pearls of Great Price

by Chester L. Saxby

Author of "The Pot of Gold," "The Bosun," etc.

IT WAS in that bare public room of "One-Eyed" Johnson's boarding house that the water-front first saw Albin Casper and welcomed him into the loose fraternity of sailoring men. The place held a scattering of all sorts and smelled of every strong odor known to the trade. The air lay thick with tobacco smoke. The ancients sat at their daily exercise of exhuming past glories and raking up fantastic scenes such as they would never witness again—and some said they never had witnessed. A childish game, this living their youth over; it took considerable imagination. The point of it was for a man to make himself out an epic figure.

They were trying hard because Captain Frame had dropped in off the *Belle Felice* for his glass of whisky that a normal man would have strangled over, and petty yarns in Captain Frame's hearing had a poor smack about them.

Frame, the hardest man on the coast, was in the habit of wrinkling up his face at their jaded attempts. Frame was an epic figure without having to open his mouth. They were all humbled by his experiences, and afraid of him, too. No matter how daring a lot of dogs they had been, they would not have sailed with him. Besides, they hated him; that was easy to see. Talking big constituted the best they could do against him. Not one but wished somebody would come along to make Frame eat dirt, to take a bit of tuck out of him.

They had scant hope of it happening.

When Albin Casper came in, shouldering the smoke away, staring about him without a care whose face he grinned at, the talk fell off—the talk of the past. There was the present looming before them. They preferred something actual any time.

Albin spelled bigness in the first glance at him. One knew right off that the eye did not measure the real breadth of him. It was not that he choked the doorway; it was not alone that he stared them all down so. Behind that look stood something fine. He was young and on the search for life as another man with a double-barrel shot-gun went on the search for game. They blinked at him—these ancients that had only their memories—and involuntarily looked at Frame.

Albin was looking at Frame, too; had singled him out easily and was according him the respect of a disrespectful gaze. He nodded. Frame nodded back.

"Thought maybe I'd find you here," said the boy.

He seemed to know he had found his man.

"I'm for taking a try at the sea."

He sat down at Frame's table. "I hope you're half the man they say you are. Most of 'em are dead ones."

Frame eyed him, a little flicker of humor in his face. Frame could appreciate talk like this, although he rarely heard it. He had an unconcealed contempt for 'longshore spirit. In his thirty years of following the sea he had become disgusted with the type of man he had to handle; they could not stand up under vigorous treatment; they gave in and stepped aside and offered no fight. One would better quit altogether if he had no fight in him. That was the edict of the sea.

Any one would swear, though, that Frame was harder than the sea, harder than he needed to be. He mocked everybody who got out of his way; he jostled every decent law that hesitated to reach out for him; he laughed at convention and jeered at the thought of respect for men who were not able to force it out of him. Usually he went unrebuked—and hated, leaving in his rude wake an intense yearning for his undoing at the hands of some vague power that was named Justice.

"I'm always looking for *men*," he replied sarcastically to Albin. "What have you got to say for yourself? How much do you know, and what's your idea?"

"Well," Albin began in a loud, eager voice, "my father couldn't stand having me around. I got on his nerves. Me, I haven't got any nerves. I want to be where there's something doing. I thought maybe the sea had a kick in it, and here I am. They told me down the bay you were just in and if I wanted action you were a —— of a fellow for that. I guess from what they say you'll do."

He laughed. The ancients let their eyes dwell on him shrewdly.

"Um-hm! You've learned how to talk, anyway. But it won't get you money."

"I don't care for the money. If you're not afraid to take me——"

Frame settled that quickly enough. Being afraid was a sensation he knew nothing about. The boy manifestly had strength and, more than that, daring. They stood up and shook hands. All in the room craned their necks; their blood whipped up with anticipation. Their prayer was going to be answered; a man had come to try conclusions with Bully Frame. Albin stepped around and measured height and reach—significantly—with this sea master that had the worst reputation out of Embleton. Albin topped him by two inches; their reach was the same.

"They said you were bigger, but you're not," he explained.

"That's no way of telling," Frame rejoined very deliberately.

"Sign me on then, and we'll see. Only, I don't know anything about the ropes or the sails."

Thus he published his uncommon honesty at the very beginning.

Frame said:

"I don't sign on men just for that. Take off your coat—um-hm!—I can use you. Twenty-five dollars a month and a long cruise."

"Suits me."

Albin's amazing faith in his twenty years spoke lightly. "A green hand now, of course," he added. "But I'll come back mate, so that's all right."

A breath went through the room and stirred the smoke.

"Oh," said Frame. His face was inscrutable. "That's a long cruise."

"I don't think so. I'm coming aboard all set for action, you know."

Tersely, metallically, in two short words the challenge was accepted—

"Come on!"

One-Eyed Johnson's place rang with that contract for many days. It was a contract in which they all took part; it was a taste of Springtime to the ancients. And those who bore scars of Frame's outrageous tyranny saw their blessed hope alive once more. Long wagers were laid that inconsistently paid tribute to the man they hated. They wanted more than anything to see Frame conquered, but they knew well that he was invincible. Those others who had put the impossible suggestion into Albin's head gave no heed to the bigness they had likely crushed, to the upstanding splendor of youth—the latest to try.

Albin stepped aboard the *Belle Felice's* deck to be met by an odor of foulness under which his inspired lungs almost collapsed. The *Belle Felice* was a whaler and perhaps the dirtiest of all whalers. Why she needed to be so coated with the grime of all her thirty-seven cruises, many wondered. The explanation bruited about from vessel to vessel was that in this accumulation of filth Frame achieved a cunning thing.

The raw stench of whale oil and burned scraps, rumor whispered, made up a small part of the smell but was strong enough to cover the other smells that Frame was not so willing to have detected. The *Belle Felice* might be more and less than a simple whaler. Frame's unfailing profits and various opportunities in the far South Seas went into this surmisal; whereas, the whaling is an uncertain venture at best and runs in cycles of losses. These surmisals had to serve because Frame's crew, well-paid, kept still tongues. The world could talk, and the vessel might borrow its atmosphere from a Zulu hut—as some swore it did. Albin thought he recalled the sickish fumes of a distillery where fortune had once set him down.

In spite of that he sent his dunnage skidding forward and gave his name to the quiet little mate, Joyce. He took to Joyce at once, as an overgrown puppy takes to a clever little spaniel. Joyce seemed to him strangely out of place, although he was not, for a bucko mate was unnecessary with Frame aboard.

"You want to look out for your job," Albin warned him playfully, "because I'm going to be mate before we get back. Maybe you'll be captain, though."

"I've heard 'em betting on it at Johnson's," the mate solemnly returned. "We've got no time here for betting. Get to reeving that running gear yonder and watch them as know their jobs if you're to be any use to us at all."

Eyes watched from every point in the harbor when the *Belle Felice* ground up her anchor and dropped down to take the breeze. Speculation and argument and laughter followed the vessel. What the knots of watchers saw gave them little reward. An awkward form, looking anything but huge against the gigantic foremast, swarmed aloft tardily and wrestled with the mysteries of the futtock shrouds. When topsails came billowing to the light wind, this form gripped the foretopmast ratlines as if to tear them asunder, and just managed to hang on.

Then the headland bulked, gray and indifferent, to blot out the view. Those who were left behind went about their business with a doubt of the boy's stern undertaking.

Their pondering was nothing to Albin's. For days that merged into weeks he pondered over the ways of ships and the ways of the men who went down to the sea in them. The vessel was hard enough to understand, but the men were like no men he had ever known, and he could not make them out. But he had to get along with them. They were all herded together with no chance for choosing, no chance for getting away when one wished some other kind of company. Their life became his life intimately. And not to understand and fall in with them was to be miserably alone.

Characteristically Albin did not choose to understand; instead, he spoke his mind in the first moment below. His immense voice beat down their low grumbling without fear of what he said. He laughed at their manner of protesting against the methods of the captain. He called them hogs snuffling and grunting in their sty and accepting any leavings that were offered. They stared stupidly; they batted wondering eyes and looked at one another to see if all had heard the insult. It seemed unbelievable that he had said hogs! He said it again.

They proceeded to prove he was right by stampeding him. He rose out of the mass of lusting fists and brute faces; he was grinning with delight. Fighting like a Greek of old he went down a second time—came up with patches of skin making his grin terrible. After that he fought like a tiger and did not go down. At the call of the first dog-watch he was directing an unknown fo'c's'l housecleaning.

One climbing the ladder at his heels muttered:

"The ol' man's goin' to spell out —— fer us ag'in. Wouldn't I know from hearin' his voice?"

Albin laughed at this as at a rare joke. When they were crowded aft and stood for the most part with eyes to the deck, waiting the usual talk, he spoke up.

"Will you go spelling out —— for us, captain? We're ready for it."

Frame's face of granite sought him out where he stood four-square, the mad light leaping in his battered, healthy face. The captain smiled by drawing up the right corner of his mouth. The crew saw this ominous sign and edged off from the newcomer. But Frame was not ready to try his strength on this bear-cub. There would be a later and better time. To the mate who stared over the sea he said:

"Half portions all round tonight, Mr. Joyce, and the same whenever you hear impudence. We command no —— ship here. Go forward, the lot of you!"

The human tide slipped by the boy, cursing him low-toned. In the dusk these men's biting hunger accused him. He met it stoutly.

"Are you standing for that? Taking punishment for what you didn't do? A man's got to eat or he can't work. But you'll work; you'll work if it kills you."

"Mut'ny!" whispered one. "Not me. Frame'll tow us in fer jailin'."

"You fool! He can't hold you! What did you do? He won't try it!"

He was disgusted, but he was learning. He was learning that the sea works wretched changes, making potter's clay out of shore swaggerers. His tongue lashed out in the night watch and forced them to listen. They pulled away until he got some of them into a corner. In the end he was commissioned to carry the message aft that they would not sail the bark unless they were fed.

He went willingly, warm through and through with his convictions. He was glad to take the brunt—learning was fighting for those who had lost their claws.

With simple directness he told Frame his errand—and Frame nodded very quietly. The pale glow of the riding lamp marked his thoughtfulness as it marked the queer pallor about his mouth by which men spoke of him as having a "whisky heart."

"Mr. Gofeen," he called to the second mate clapping battens on the hatch, "have the cook give the men a snack. As for yourself—" he added to Albin.

"A good joke is worth going hungry for," the boy agreed.

Gofeen shot an astonished glance at him as he passed. Almost admiration went out of his shallow eyes. Gofeen, too, was young, but not with such youth.

From then on, all the dirty jobs of the vessel were thrust Albin's way. The crew saw that; saw how Joyce skilfully planned his quiet-mannered punishment—expressionless, offhand. They saw besides how expressionlessly and unhesitantly Albin accepted his fate. They had thought he was a fool; they believed now he was something more than a martyr, a superhuman fellow, a wonder.

For nothing was able to hurt him. In the midst of the disgraces heaped on him he seemed the most contented man aboard, too big a proposition for Frame. No matter whether he slushed the masts or holystoned the deck of its years of dirt, he laughed and sang and never grew tired. His example became a dangerous thing. Never a hint of rebellion for authority to fasten on; never the lightest grumbling; never a sign that the proud spirit was being tamed. It annoyed Joyce so that his old woman's calmness was ruffled; to Gofeen it was incredible. Youth that would not be downed! Guts equal to Frame's! They had signed on a Tatar, Joyce admitted.

Frame appeared to take no such view of it. Frame paid little enough attention; almost ignored the boy's presence. Frame should have been hounding him with both fists, if he were to bear out the tales ashore. When Albin, partly in ignorance of sea-discipline and partly in independence, grinned into his face or laughed over what he was set to do, this sailing-master who was a law to himself should have knocked him down and kicked him into the scuppers; but he did not. Rather, he paid in good round coin when a job was well done. There was a certain sportsmanship in his quick nod, plain encouragement. He even slapped Albin on the back.

"Proper stuff, my man. You'll make a Jack one of these days."

"Hard work's what I want," Albin said crisply. "I don't mind this. It keeps me in trim. I learned my lesson in the harvest fields. Spent two years in a lumber camp, too. Only, they give you good food in those places."

"As to that," Frame reminded him, "nobody shanghaied you. You'll have to take what you get and make the best of it. Grouching won't help."

"I'm not grouching. Wasn't I telling 'em the same thing? If they drive you past what you can do, lay off, I said to 'em; lay off and tell 'em you're laying off. But whining behind the mate's back won't get a man anything."

Frame narrowed his eyes at that gospel. "We don't want any preachers."

Albin laughed. "You won't need 'em if things are handled right."

The moment grew rather dark—until Frame slowly smiled. He had his time and his ways, had Frame. The watch told Albin as much. They had no foolish notion that the Old Man was losing his claws. They plainly advised the boy to learn to knuckle under or look for a chance to desert while the strength was in him. The Old Man could kill without putting his hands on you, they warned him.

But he had no intention of deserting. He found it exhilarating aloft and enjoyed putting his mind to the problems of sailing. Navigation looked to be an interesting science, and in stray moments he delved into it with the aid of a few books Gofeen lent him. The fishing he anticipated with intense satisfaction. He guessed that if anybody deserted, it would be Captain Frame.

THE *Belle Felice* was standing down before the full wrath of the northeast trade wind to raise the islands off Cape St. Roque when the first test came. And it did not come out of Albin's initiative. Frame had dropped that easy mask for once; the temper of the man had showed itself at last—but not on Albin.

Albin climbed down stiffly from the rings of the foretopgallant rigging for his four short hours. He was fine and ready for sleep. He tumbled into his bunk without a glance at brooding eyes and a hateful muttering pervading the place.

But the brooding grew; the muttering ran on to a high pitch. Several men tearfully complained that they couldn't stand it. He bawled at them to be quiet and let him sleep. For answer they kept it up interminably.

After a while he gave it up in anger and turned on them.

"What's the convention for?" he blazed out. "Who's dead?"

It was the old trouble, new as yet on this cruise. Frame had been drinking again. When he drank, there was no satisfying him. Ropes torn out of their hands while they were walking them—giving them dirt at every turn—lashing with his hands when his mouth wasn't enough—and every man doing his best.

"Plain sailin' like this 'ere—'tain't reasonable. What's we did?"

"Plenty," Albin retorted. "You're keeping me awake. Cut out the talk; it won't get you anywhere. Do something—and shut up! Lot of sheep—that's what you are! Ba-a-a! When you're scared of a fellow, of course he'll pick on you."

"Easy fer you to talk."

They measured his bulk gloomily. Dave Fielden, to be sure, had a gashed cheek. Keefe bore a blackening eye.

"Ain't another one could stand up to 'im. Won't leave nobody say nothin'. Picks on Keefe an' then——"

"Sheep—that's what I said," Albin flung at them. "First you're hogs and then you're sheep. Squirm, you lantern-jawed Irishman! You're easy meat!"

"I am, am I? Didn't I heave overboard the britches 'e bled me fer?"

"Why don't you put the articles on him then? If you know you're right, what are you waiting for? Wanting me to do it, are you? If one man don't dare, the whole bunch has got to do it. You don't know what it is to act together."

He told them in detail what he meant. He was crazy for sleep, and perhaps he put into their heads more than he meant to. But he was honest with it. The thought of Frame drinking riled him heartily. Drinking was not allowed aboard, and the captain was disobeying his own rule. If they would organize and show some sense, Frame would have to do the right thing. He saw they were getting it, too. They listened sulkily, but they puckered up their faces and let the idea sink in.

In the end, however, nothing was done. They were exhausted men; their troubles drugged them; they objected to thinking. Some day, if Frame kept it up——

Albin faced the captain the next day and said his say. His inherent frankness saw to that. And he wanted to assure Frame that *he* wasn't grouching.

"I can take care of myself," he declared. "But they've got a grievance, and they're afraid of you. Ashore a bunch of men would know how to deal with a boss that wasn't fair. These fellows hadn't thought of hitting it off together."

"So you told 'em, eh?" Frame's mouth hardened. "Sea-lawyer, maybe."

"No, I'm no sea-lawyer; I don't have to be. If any man soaked me because he'd been drinking, I'd handle it my own way. But they've got the same rights, only they're not as big. A man don't have to take everything because he's small."

He believed Frame would go after him then and there. In his disgust of the drinking he welcomed the open break. A principle of honesty always stung him past caution, made him heedless of consequences. He was disappointed when Frame swung on his heel and strode aft. He had been mistaken in his man, that was sure.

At least, he had done what he could to ease the hard lot of those less able to take care of themselves. He was beginning to see what a sailor had to put up with. He seethed with the injustice of it. He could not abide injustice.

And the next thing he knew, he was face to face with a real decision. Frame had appeared at the weather rail frowning at nothing and bracing his feet as the *Belle Felice* leaned gracefully with the weight of her clothes. Before him the wheelsman shrank, smelling that steaming liquor, dreading that drunken mind.

Albin's impulse was to beard Frame and demand an explanation, but judgment—of a kind—ruled. He would get no satisfaction out of a drunken man. Better to attack the source of it. He shook with passion. Wily Gofeen let him march down the companion steps aft and where Joyce snored in his berth.

He said huskily to Shoneill, the steward and cooper:

"Show me the captain's whisky! Show me where he keeps it! Quick!"

Shoneill turned and scurried like a rabbit, hauling out his keys as he ran.

"Is he bad?" he cried. "Did he send you? Here! Be quick!"

Albin blinked. How could he know what Shoneill meant?

"Send me?" He made a wry face. "No, I sent myself. He's got no right to be drinking. He made the rule, didn't he?"

Flask after flask went into his pockets. The rest he did into a bundle.

"What are the men to think if the Old Man can get himself drunk?" he demanded.

"Don't do that!" Shoneill said trembling. "——'s sake, don't do that!"

"It's cheating," Albin declared hotly. "You can tell him I took it if you want to. I'll look out for myself. I didn't know he was a skunk."

Gofeen saw him cross the deck and openly toss the bundle, then the single flasks one after another, over the side. It took the breath out of Gofeen's lungs.

For a time that was all. Frame offered no retaliation. But in a week he reeled on to the deck in the first morning watch, and he gasped as he tugged at his collar; his face showed haunted, horribly fear-fed. Beside the mast he brought up and tried to shout; his hand stretched out in Albin's direction, clawing—a convulsion shook him, snapped him. Down he tumbled in a miserable heap.

Joyce barked: "Shoneill! Aft, one of you! The captain's taken!"

And still Albin did not understand, although he sprang to give aid.

Shoneill showed his chalky face.

"It's all gone!" he bawled hoarsely.

"Rip off the hatch!" roared Joyce. "Down you go and drag up some rum!"

Belaying pins attacked the battens. A man swung down a rope into the hold, and presently a case was hoisted up. Hands fell upon it and ripped it apart. They knocked the head off the first bottle they touched and fed the burning stuff into Frame's blue mouth as he lay unconscious. Albin lifted his stark gaze from the case lettered *Jamaica Rum.* He found Gofeen's eyes on him. They seemed to carry a message.

Marnay growled:

"Comin' round! The whisky heart ain't got 'im yet, more pity! Some day he won't come to, an' that'll be a good day."

"What's that?" queried the boy. "A whisky heart, you say?"

"Can't do 'ithout it," Marnay grumbled. "Pickled in it he's got to be."

Albin conned this, and a grimness something like shame came over him.

Within an hour Frame was himself. He came and stood before Albin.

"I thought you knew how to fight," he said. "Maybe you're afraid of me."

"Afraid of you?"

The boy's pulse thrummed in the joy of that challenge. It was outright battle he longed for. Frame was as big as he.

"If I'd known you were that kind I'd never have shipped with you. Anyway, there's rum enough."

He felt an intolerable disappointment when Frame turned away after studying him earnestly.

The *Belle Felice* hugged the South American coast while topsail breezes came and went, giving place to the westerlies across the bows. She raised an island.

"We'll sight whales now any time," was Albin's thought.

That was when they lay off South Georgia. He yearned for something big to pit his strength against.

"What are the guns for?" he inquired. "You don't shoot whales."

The watch shrugged off the query and oiled their pieces to thorough satisfaction. They were not given to talking about this particular business. And when glistening mast-trucks hove in sight the guns disappeared at once. The next day two boats put off and for days were absent. They returned, bringing scores of velvety hides that the crew cheered over. A lookout scoured the sea for vessels.

"Well, it's seals, then," Albin remarked. To him this sort of enterprise suggested nothing unlawful. "But I'd like mighty well to go after whales," he grinned.

He stood at the wheel. Frame surveyed him narrowly, his lips pursed.

"Sealing is better pay. Can you handle a gun, my man?"

"Aye, and my fists. I'd wish there'd be somebody to doubt it."

"You can try killing them with your fists if you like. At Tristan you'll get a chance. I wonder now if you'd have any objection to sealing, by the way?"

There grew a darkness in his face as he asked this. Albin wondered.

"Well, there'd be the fact that they're harmless creatures. It's too bad."

"We call it *whaling*," Frame emphasized. "It's much the same. The difference won't be worth mentioning ashore. That's understood, is it?"

So then the truth was out, the truth that sealing—at least of this kind and by unlicensed vessels—was against the law. And Frame was baiting him.

"Don't know that it is. Whaling is picking on something that can fight back. I'm not so sure sealing is. And if it's against the law, there's a reason for it. I thought you had guts. Polar bears now—that would be different."

He did not comprehend the gleam that came into Frame's eyes with that speech. He had his hands ready if Frame struck out at him. But he had forgotten the men's warning that Frame could kill without putting his hands on one. Youth and age approached things differently. Frame asked sternly:

"You mean you won't obey orders, is that it? You refuse, eh?"

As luck would have it, Albin raised his eyes at that instant to the drive the men were making directly before him on the rocks. He saw the innocent, foolish animals being slaughtered without a chance; he saw the young, dazed and wondering, beaten over the head; he saw the females trying in vain to protect their own, and shot down mercilessly. His gorge rose with the sight.

"By ——!" he cried. "That's murder!"

His teeth gritted when nets were flung to imprison the flapping, bawling things; when the clubs descended. His hand went out and gripped Frame's shoulder tensely.

"Murder they're doing! Call 'em off! Call 'em off! I'll choke the life out of you if you don't!"

Frame merely scrutinized him enigmatically.

"You'd maybe think you're mate already. Or better than that, let's say. Take that hand off me, boy!"

The shrill piping from the shore got into Albin's brain. He took the hand off, and launched both hands at the captain's throat. Right and justice!

"Call 'em off!" he roared huskily.

For answer Frame's fist crashed.

It was well that none but Shoneill saw what followed. Two huge men, well matched, terrible, fought an ugly fight; but that was not the reason it was well the others did not see. The reason was that one of these two was a common sailor and the other the captain. Neither cared about that, though.

And Frame, the boastful, the hardest man on the coast, Frame with his contempt for those who could not force him to respect their rights, Frame who was feared by all Embleton harbor—went down first. The fool who had dared such a man stood over him, triumphant, threatening, demanding—

"Call 'em in!"

The blood on Frame's face was nothing to the blood in it! Nearly strangling him it was with hate and mortification. Up on to his knees again, ready for the spring that should carry him headlong onto that boy—on his knees he rested, conquering his rage. In the face of a deeper vengeance this other could wait. He signaled to Shoneill and mopped the smear out of his eyes.

"Blow the horn!" he said to the steward.

And Albin dropped his arms.

They came in wondering, three boats of them. They loaded their kill on to the deck, protesting as they clambered over the bulwark, growling that they saw no craft in the offing to scare them away from a fine hunt. Stouter men this bloody job made of them; their hearts were in it and not in the sailoring. Their hands had been steeped in a welter of warm life-blood; coarse and hard they looked.

"What's up?" they wanted to know. "What's the alarm for?"

Frame, struggling to his feet with those tell-tale marks on him, quieted the cataract of argument. Something undue was happening here.

Frame waved toward Albin and painfully stood up.

"Ask him," he said briefly. "Stands with the Gover'ment."

They crowded on. Hard to believe—but there was Frame badly knocked up, and the fool with his knuckles skinned, his shirt torn. One laughed. One snarled. The half-circle slowly hemmed the boy in. He glared at them.

"Gover'ment be ——!" he flung out. "Dirty murder's what it is!"

Gofeen moved to be close at Albin's elbow. Gofeen played a game, too.

"Steady, now! Steady, all of you!" he intoned.

While he rubbed his nose he whispered out of the corner of his mouth:

"Why didn't you kill 'im when you had the chance? He's got you where he wants you now! He'll keep his hands clean."

One thrust his face at Albin.

"What's eatin' yuh? Comin' one on us, are yuh? We shipped on lays fer the hides, buh ——! Doin' us is what!"

Red-eyed, another elbowed in.

"A spy the kid is! Run 'im up!"

"Cheat yer own mates o' hard-earned money, will yuh? No, yuh won't!"

Albin watched craftily as the menace grew, watched for the first sign—to leap in and halt it while he could. If they all started at once, he had no chance. He was one against many. He saw Frame's methods at last and detested them.

But he was not afraid; his fiery youth saw to that. The smirk on his lips dared them and their cheapness. He waited, all care tossed away.

And they did not mean to let him wait long. Marnay was in front, and Marnay was Irish. This kid had gone far enough. Good money out of their pockets! Not if he knew it. Lickin' the cap'n and lording it generally! He crouched.

But even then he was slower than Gofeen. The second mate whirled in a flash and faced Albin with a gun in his hand. He pressed it against Albin's ribs.

"Back with you! No dodging, understand! I'll shoot! Turn around! March!"

To the crew he bawled:

"Into the boats! This is my job!"

They were unwilling to accept this settlement. Marnay cursed. But not to obey was mutiny, and mutiny was the end of everything. They straggled off.

Gofeen marched Albin to the sail-loft and locked him in. He fumbled a great deal with the door to cover what he had to say. He talked fast.

"We'll let 'em cool off. Where's your brains? You ain't smart enough fer this game. Don't I know he was laying big bets before we cleared that you wouldn't come back? He's for having the crew eat you up, and you let him do it! He'd drop a little on the sealing and make it up on you. You're going at it wrong. There's the whisky! Can't you see he'd die without the whisky?"

Albin sat down on a heap of canvas and met Gofeen's eyes. Slowly he said:

"I thought you were white, Gofeen. Only a skunk would fight that way."

The door banged to. He sat in the dark and the strong odor. He heard Frame attack Gofeen's interference. He heard the hunters return and the results of their hunting stowed away. His hand was swelling badly. He blew on it and wondered a good deal. He had shipped with a flock of poachers and blackbirds—first cousins to slave traders, traders in impressed labor—and he had bet all the money he owned that he would be mate. These days were stripping away much of the youth in him and burning out some of the unthinking idiocy he had started with. In the dark he thought it all over. It came to him that he *had* to be mate; that they'd never follow him any other way. Of Gofeen, who brought his supper, he asked for a candle and the books on navigation. Gofeen grinned his admiration and brought them.

On the third day he was freed. The sealing was over, and hands were needed to make sail. He blinked at the sunlight. Determination made him grim.

"I'm going to make him come across fair, Gofeen," he said. "I'm going to show him and the crew I know my business. I'll lick him and the lot of 'em, if they want me to, but I'll get 'em to trust me so they'll stop this dirty work!"

Gofeen swore mildly. "You'll never grow up, I guess," he shrugged.

He stared when Albin walked up to Frame leaning against the wheelhouse and told him:

"Fighting you was wrong, and you shouldn't have driven me to it. I haven't got a —— of a lot of respect for you, but I mean to be mate, and I'll fight fair. You needn't try to do me in, because it won't work."

Frame surveyed him coldly.

"Get along for'ard and shut your mug!"

ON THE wings of the strong, westerly wind the *Belle Felice* took to the open sea, making easting on the second leg of the cruise. Albin, having spoken his mind, did his work with a still tongue in his mouth, did the work of three men and did it cheerfully. The crew chuckled. The kid was broken in at last.

One night the watch sat in deliberation. A question was up concerning the brig's next business, which was trading. Albin's advice was not asked. He sat alone and heard for the first time of the pearl-buying. They discussed asking the captain for equal shares in the pearls after the expenses were deducted. A paper went around for all to sign. They were feeling their oats.

But when it came to taking the paper aft to Frame, none cared to do it.

"Draw fer it!" suggested Dave Fielden with a cunning leer.

So that was what they did. The lot fell on Jim Barood who winced and went ashen and mumbled excuses until they shoved him out by main force.

In three minutes he was back with his condition to tell of his failure.

Amid the muttering Albin asked the one next to him:

"Shipped on lays for all you took, did you? Then what you're asking is right enough. I'll walk the paper aft if you want me to. He can't refuse if you've got it coming."

They nudged one another and gave him the paper, crumpled and torn.

"I'll make a deal with you," he said, standing up. "You get your lays on the pearls, and you hunt no more seals this cruise. What do you say?"

Jaw muscles bunched, and hard eyes drooped hatefully at him. He minded none of it. He waited until they swallowed their anger. He was still something of a boy; he believed they would stand by their word. They gave it.

He hummed his way to Frame and told his errand. Frame asked:

"Where's your name on this? Why didn't you sign, too?"

"I signed on at twenty-five dollars a month," he was reminded.

"Then what's this got to do with you?"

"They're shipmates," said Albin, "if that's what you're asking."

"You want to stand well with 'em so you'll get to be mate. I see."

"Second mate is all they could name me for," the boy returned. "It's mate I mean to be, and they've got nothing to do with that."

"Then you ought to stand in with me. That's sense, ain't it?"

Albin laughed.

"Maybe it's sense, if a fellow wanted to be that kind of a mate. But it wouldn't do the brig any good."

Frame weighed the paper silently. In reality he was weighing Albin and finding considerable astonishment in it. As to the paper, that was not worth bothering over either way. The crew cheated him, and he cheated the crew. Speaking of fairness, how was that? He scrawled his signature and handed it back.

As he gave it over, he looked closely at Albin. The sardonic something in his face changed just a trifle in that moment, changed to something stronger and clearer—and quickly changed back again. Youth looked forward, while age tried to peer over the high wall of experience backward. Frame thrust the paper at Albin.

"What's a few dollars? I'll get more work out of 'em. Get for'ard!"

Albin remained just long enough to say:

"You better lock up a few cases of that rum if you've got a whisky heart, the way they say you have."

He hummed his way to the fo'c's'l and delivered the paper. He grinned at them, but when they had all seen the captain's signature, instead of clapping him on the back, they treated him to an ugly stare of suspicion.

Albin was not of a mind to take this distrust of theirs seriously. He had discovered that seafaring men scorn to show emotion or any soft feeling, gratitude included. It did not bother him to mark their grim silence. He was satisfied to have done them a good turn, to have saved them what was theirs. They were decent fellows underneath the surface. He was glad to prove that he bore no malice.

In that whistling, stormy passage no whales were pursued. But with a new sense of the seriousness of what he had set himself to do, to be, he had less time for disappointment. Hard study of Gofeen's books on navigation and close and eager observation of the sailing—these things he gave his mind to. They and the lessons in life aboard ship were molding him into the true measure of a seaman, into a better, fuller knowledge of ship-handling than these others, with all their years of dull experience, could absorb.

To his strength and deftness were gradually added an understanding of methods aft. He had the blessed heritage of a good mind properly educated. He had Gofeen—who pinned much faith to him—demonstrate the use of the sextant and the quadrant. He never overlooked an opportunity to show his growing worth; yet the loud, brash utterances that had sounded like boasting stamped him no longer. He fought battles with himself, fought and won them.

He knew he was a better man than Gofeen and hoped that both forward and aft they were finding that out. He knew it in his heart and was confident in his chance of establishing the fact. But the crew merely wondered that he was still alive and healthy. Frame kept his thoughts and plans to himself.

Then a purple island lifted out of a Summer sea, a purple island becoming luxuriantly green as they cut down the distance. It lay in a clasp of coral like a great emerald, and the *Belle Felice* stood in past the reef and dropped anchor. And Joyce, whose health had been none of the best, took a fever. Upon that, Frame appointed Gofeen acting mate and mustered the crew to name one of their number for second officer. His putting the matter into their hands marked conspicuous shrewdness.

A thrill of anticipation ran through Albin's blood. His time had come. Smiling happily, sure of himself, he waited for the crew to speak his name.

But the crew almost unanimously named Brian Marnay for the place.

Youth was a sterling possession then. For an instant Albin felt the world fall away, and he had to struggle to keep his face from marking the hurt. On all sides of him men were cheering. He gripped himself hard and cheered with them. He laughed into Frame's face. He had a new respect for the man who could manage that.

The natives came on the echo of that cheer. Like a cloud sweeping over that unstirred lagoon they came, a black cloud of savagery. Their canoes made of hollowed logs they thrust out from hiding-places; their bronze bodies gleamed in the sunlight; the prospect was alive with them. And immediately trading began.

It was pearls the natives bargained with, pearls of rare size and beauty; pearls delicately pink, white like liquid snow, regal; pearls matched in dozens and as round as miniature crystals; pearls big as small acorns and without a flaw; pearls cheap at three thousand dollars apiece; pearls strangely suggestive of tears that had petrified. These were what the natives brought and shopped with.

As against them the mystery of the *Belle Felice* was uncovered, and Embleton's rumor came to have reason. The hatch was thrown open; its secret came into view. But two items mainly constituted the *Belle Felice's* cargo. It was rum for the male savages; it was gingham and tinsel braid for the women—a gaudy show.

Shoneill kept the books. All about him was strewed the substance of bribery. Carelessly, in watchful laziness, the crew draped themselves about the masts where the sealing guns had been leaned.

To Albin the picture bloomed with romance. This swarthy invasion made his blood run strong and his youth exult. He could forget the greed and the smells in the spectacle they presented; he could forget the disgusting ignorance in the dusky picturesqueness. The background of royal palms and mangroves, crescent-wise; the fringe of pure, pure sand; the glimmer of unseen things behind—a fit setting for these marketers clambering over the rail, strutting the deck and poking their noses into everything, violently shaking their heads at Shoneill's way of figuring—and at times breaking suddenly into laughter more terrible than their dignity. They jabbered in the tones of banjo strings.

All in all they were hard dealers. The value of the pearls was not unknown to them; it was only their greedy appetites that made them victims and that sooner or later guided the pearls into Shoneill's brass box.

Nothing of this was too quickly done. On the third day they were still at it. But by then the offerings of the islanders ran to smaller size and greater flaws. The bargaining settled down to protracted bickering, to frequent disturbances. Nasty situations developed with the childish savages, ominous scenes of temper.

Albin viewed it all in a daze that, lifting slowly, left him cold with dread of the outcome. These avaricious dolts were skimming on thin ice. Each hour tolled its warning. Possibly because he had nothing to gain and could not work himself into a heat with the trading, he stood alone in scenting this danger. Frame's responsibility here loomed tremendously. Frame held life and death in his hand.

But Frame had changed. He had been a cold, scheming master. The quality fell away from him now, and the mask and the veneer. The men observed the change but little; only to Albin, a spectator of everything—and everything strange—was the truth given. Frame had become scarcely better than the savages.

His eyes—he was always in drink now—flamed and gloated. He even stole three pearls entrusted to him to weigh, and swore that he didn't have them. He cheated at the weights, he who had remarked carelessly, "What's a few dollars?" He kept some of the gayest and shiniest cloth in his cabin, whence now and again a woman came bearing a bolt of it.

Aye, Albin marked the stark change, but not the worst part of it.

Gofeen laughed:

"The cap'n's a —— with the women. None o' my business, of course, if they want to go down there. They're only animals. He drives bargains."

Albin ignored this foul hint. But Frame's absence from the deck at such a time disturbed him. The crew were growing maudlin and fighting with the natives. One squealing black had had his single pearl wrenched out of his hand. Frame should be on hand to stop that before it was too late. At the suggestion to halt this suicide Gofeen shrugged and Marnay cursed. In a little while it would be beyond them.

So Albin, with no immediate suspicion in his mind, stumped down the companion steps toward Frame's cabin-berth. Poor Joyce could be heard raving in delirium. The boy knocked on Frame's door and stepped inside. Frame started up out of a drunken sprawl to leer at him, to leer and sway and frown at the intrusion. Beyond him Albin could see a native woman, one whose pearls were gone with greedy shopping.

The boy's stomach was near to turning then. He clenched his fists. This that he had happened on told him how much he despised Frame. But his chief thought was for the safety of the brig, which was of greater moment than this outrage to decency. He came to the point briefly, keeping his eyes on the bulkhead.

"Trouble's in the offing. You'll lose the brig if they go on as they are doing. Gofeen and Marnay don't take any notice of it. There'll be war soon."

"Why don't you do something?" Frame smirked. "Get out of here!"

"I've got no right. They won't obey me. But an officer now—that's different. An officer to throw some sense into 'em they'd thank later on."

Frame bleared at him.

"Get on deck! Tell Gofeen I'm putting you in charge! Try your —— gospel on 'em!"

He waved his arms, halting argument.

Albin opened his mouth, and shut it again. He strode out and on to the deck. Frame was sending him against them all. He marched up to Gofeen.

"I'm taking a dare, Gofeen. Cap'n's orders! I'm going to stop this dirty stealing!"

The heathenish babble drowned him out. Shoneill in a dry, even voice droned his offers at the weights. It was all a vile travesty.

Albin sprang among them. He laid hands on all that came in front of him. Helter-skelter he pushed them toward the rail. The last bolts of cloth he hurled after them. He roared to them to get off the vessel. After days of gnawing inactivity the joy of battle was his. The blacks retreated, howling. A revulsion for what wretchedness the trading had produced centered in Shoneill's brass box. The crew awoke when he tore the box of pearls out of the steward's hands and advanced with it to the rail. Yelling, they rushed in and bore him down and saved the spoils.

They would have finished him then and there, but that they had to meet the natives who had begun a war-dance. Clubbed sealing guns whirled amid that dark mass and beat back the last of it. When the struggle was over, the savages had picked clean all that the mysterious hold had borne southward. Not a bolt of cloth remained, not a bottle of rum. A hundred yards from the vessel the mocking remnant of the evil stuff rode the flowing tide toward the fringe of pure white sand and the background of royal palms and mangroves and the glimmer of unseen things.

Albin confronted Marnay. He grinned. He had probably saved them.

"Trouble's over," he bawled. "I'm your man now, Marnay!"

He meant it for peace-making, but Marnay glared back spitefully. He said no word, but deliberately he spat an inch from Albin's foot. Likewise the others. They hated him for being different. They hated him for his education and confidence that broke in on their right to behave as fools. They wanted no more of him in the fo'c's'l. They refused his humility. He could have his brevet commission.

And the captain, watching from aft, not so drunken as might be thought, saw the full flush of their hatred and asked Albin if he was afraid to be second mate.

So from force of necessity, the boy became boss of a watch.

"We'll weigh anchor, Gofeen. The glass is falling. Look alive, both watches! There's weather in that cloud. Where's your eye, *Mister* Casper?"

THEY ran for the open water like fearful deer. The barometer fell steadily. The darkness set in after a weird twilight pointing yellow fingers. It was suffocating at midnight; the dawn failed to appear, but a sucking heat drew tremorous gusts like ghosts of winds long dead. After dread hours the fore-front of the storm struck on like a great cat's paw and knocked the brig over. She rallied in terror. Her struggle was of life and death.

In the thick of it Frame played his biggest card and dangled Albin's new authority before the harassed crew. But Albin was unmindful. The wild night exalted him. He was happy pitting his zeal against the elements. He craved nothing finer than this. He laughed as he labored to hold his own. The storm was beaten.

But the brig—the brig was beaten, too. This strong, throbbing craft of cunningly molded thews was a torn, riven, broken thing. She leaked fore and aft; she leaked at butt and seam; she staggered on without hope, blind and wayward and hunted. Albin had wrestled to save her—and all the pride of her was departed.

Worse than that, Gofeen, himself young but with no such youth as that night had witnessed; Gofeen, acting mate and nursing a hot spark of ambition, conspiring to step into another's shoes, slipped in his own and went with a huge comber to his death. Aye, Gofeen, the only man aboard who appreciated Albin's fearless creed and would have defended him, was caught up and washed high over the rail.

The captain of the *Belle Felice* took stock of the situation. He did not hide the unholy hate smarting in his heart against the boy who had bested him. The scheming of his mind had somehow come to nothing, and he had no resources left. His cunning was ridiculous with the seas topping the bark, with the hold full of water. The last chance was gone; Joyce threshed in his bunk. He bawled for Marnay.

"You're mate, Marnay!" he bawled. "Who's this Casper, anyway?"

"The —— I am!" Marnay bawled back. "I don't stay aboard this tub!"

"What's that?" Frame tried to reach him, furious. "What's up now?"

"We'll be takin' to the boats," the man said, amazing him. "She's founderin'."

There was a bleak judgment for him and for Albin in this. He would lose his vessel, and Albin would lose the chance of making good his boast. Neither would win then! Frame stared. But Albin strode to confront him, unwilling to give in.

"You've got to give it to me," he said. "Between us we'll take her in."

And Frame knew the boy spoke the truth. He simply waved his hand. What was this other matter compared with the loss of his brig? The boy could fight, at least; could fight the men's cowardice. The choice of two evils!

"Save the brig, and you're mate then," Frame burst out. "Let them take to the boats, and you're left to rot, you fool!"

Albin tore off his coat and went forward to uphold his destiny. And every man he spoke to laughed at him. They voted—as an organization they voted—to abandon ship and save their precious lives.

What a travesty on his teaching! When organization might have worked for salvation in the earlier days of the cruise, they were not ready for it. When individual pride could keep them afloat now, they banded together like sheep to toss the life of the *Belle Felice* to the mercy of the sea.

The die was cast. He had asked for fight, and past all his yearning it was his. He had to fight the purpose of twenty men. He had to fight for self-preservation. This was the test. For this he had been born.

He took quick note of where the boats lay and stationed himself with his back to the tryworks amidships. He did not hurry, and neither did they. But when they were ready the fo'c's'l emptied itself completely. They moved upon him in a body. He had his shirt off before they arrived. They refused to avoid him.

Shoneill will never tire of telling about that fight. His position was in the wreck of the galley where with the cook he watched and shuddered. A horde against a demon—that was what he saw. He drank cold coffee-dregs to keep his nerves from snapping as the struggle grew to its worst. At its worst it was terrible.

Bare hands can do murder. Men slipped in blood until they could not stand; other men with the smear of it in their eyes ran blindly into the iron face of the caldron and went down, victims of their anger-craze.

But no man can beat twenty, no matter how strong he is or how weak they are with fear and spleen. Eight of the crew sprawled on the deck unable to get up before Albin's knees gave way; and, fighting on his knees, he dropped another. They got him then—as he had known that they would. His own system had ruined him. He was biggest when the hope was thinnest. Shoneill says he was grinning when the brutal boot drove at his jaw. And he had not cried quits.

The conquerors moved straight for the boats and began to swing them in wide arcs preparatory to dropping them before it was discovered that all three had had their bottoms stove in. It seemed uncanny, so carefully had the boats been guarded up to the very moment of the fight. And Albin had not known enough to do that. Then they perceived Frame standing on the poop leaning on an ax——

Albin, half-dead, swaying upward to his elbow and gazing through a haze, was too late to see this tableau. Frame's triumph was lost on him.

What he managed to see came an hour later when the men had drawn aside, muttering, whimpering, hollow-eyed. For Frame lurched fo'c's'le-wise, suddenly haggard and spent, walking as if he balanced himself on a narrow board. The pasty hue was once more on his lips; his eyes rolled sightlessly. Without warning he went into a spasm, and so fell. The reaction had reached his heart, his vulnerable whisky heart. Shoneill raced out of the cabin, chattering with fright.

"The case!" he shouted in Frame's ear. "I put it in the locker like you told me! I swear to ——, sir! But it's gone!"

Frame, prone on the deck and gasping for breath, heard the steward's cry, frowned, shook his head wearily. His weak hand tried to reach a pocket. "I—sold—it——"

Shoneill flung himself down and thrust in his fist, uncomprehending. He fetched out the one little object the pocket contained: a black pearl.

One, abject in this appalling event, broke out: "Who's to fetch us in now? There ain't a man can navigate!"

Frame's mouth curled in that old way, indomitable to the last. His hand went jerking out. He pointed to Albin.

So youth won after all, self-assured youth. But another had won before him, for Albin had sworn to come back mate; whereas he came back captain.

Captain Casper came sailing back to Embleton, sailing somehow and anyhow, sailing by the grace of God and steady light winds, sailing under plain canvas and little more—but *sailing*. It was a defiance of sea-law that such as he should sail the brig home at all, but he could not know that. That the *Belle Felice* remained afloat was a defiance of natural laws, for that matter. They managed it together.

The ancients in One-Eyed Johnson's place, who had bet in doleful certainty that he would not come back mate, chuckled sagely. They had one and all figured it just as it happened—if one were to believe them. They had known it all the time.

But in their rude old hearts never could really see how it had happened. It was not to be expected that they could.

by Thomas McMorrow

The Man Who Wouldn't be King

Author of "The Merchant and the M. P.'s of Toxene," "Ikey Baumgart's Burglary Insurance," etc.

"IF YOU ask *me*," said the fight tout, blowing soda-water in a fine spray from his gray mustaches; "there is a dozen men right here in this crowd could knock Carpentier and Dempsey silly—the both of them!"

I hadn't asked him anything. We were sitting in a soda booth across the way from Mr. Rickard's new stadium waiting for the doors to open. The Dempsey-Carpentier fight was coming off at last, and all the world had come over to Jersey to see it, and when all the world tries to crowd into a soda-water booth you are lucky to get a seat at a table, even at the cost of being jostled into conversation by a tout.

"Yes?" I smiled.

"Yes!" said the tout.

"I could pick a dozen of them out myself—a dozen men that would make them two stiffs jump out of the ring! I got an eye for a fighter. What are you doing—giving me an argument?"

The crowd hedged us in. When I tried to rise and leave the tout I displaced the crowd, and it sat down in my lap. I got it to its numerous feet again, and it backed against my chair, and crushed me up against the table. I could not choose but hear.

"Have a cigar," I said, handing a weed to the tout. He smelt it, lighted it with my match, and planted his elbows on the table.

"Yes, sir!" he said, chewing the cigar into the corner of his mouth. "The two of them! Give them both a good cuffing! I had a boy once myself could do it and no trouble, and I picked him out of a crowd not half this size. Not half!"

"He must have been champion," I said.

"He was," said the tout. "Yep. Champion of the world! Only he wouldn't admit to it."

"He wouldn't—what?" I asked puzzled. "You mean that the world wouldn't admit it, don't you?"

"You heard me," said the tout. "He wouldn't admit to it! Didn't I beg him? Didn't I go down on my knees on a ferry-slip in Hoboken and ask that boy to be champion of the world? And he wouldn't. No, sir, he wouldn't— Ever been in Butte, Montana?"

"No," I confessed.

"That's where I got my boy. In them days I am a producer, and I am producing a boy to fight down at the old Red Mitt in Butte, Montana. You ever been in the old Red Mitt Athletic Club in Butte, Montana."

"No," I said after a moment's thought. "I was never there either."

"The old Red Mitt in Butte, Montana, is down in Fleischman's Alley. You remember Fleischman's Alley anyway, don't you?"

"Let's see," I murmured reflectively. I hated to disagree so much with him. "Was it—was it somewhere out west near——"

"Butte?" he aided me hopefully.

"Butte!" I exclaimed. "Montana!"

"Shake," he said, putting his hand across the table.

ONE Summer night (said the fight tout) I am standing in the doorway of the old Red Mitt watching out for a boy called Billy Dugan. I never see this Billy Dugan before that night; a friend of mine in the barber business tells me this Billy Dugan is good, and asks me to use my influence and get him a bout and give him a good start. So I go around to the old Red Mitt to inquire if the manager has an opening for an ambitious young man.

"I got a nigger here who can knock splinters out of an oak plank," says the manager, thinking. "I would like to show him tonight, but there are only three boys in town who will box him, and they are still asleep in bed, having boxed this coon last night. Can your boy take it?"

"You bet," I says. "He is very anxious to get a start."

"This coon will give him a great start," says the manager, "if he don't care where he goes. Bring him around!"

So I telephone my barber friend the good news, and there I am watching for this Billy to bust through the crowd of deadheads clustered under the arc-lights listening in on the fights up-stairs. We have to go on next, and I am worrying, as the manager will think I am afraid to fight my boy against his nigger, and I never run out on a fight in my life.

"Where's your boy, Joe?" hollers the manager down the stairs to me.

"Coming!" I yells back.

Then I see a big red-headed guy waving to me out there.

"Hello, Joe," he hollers. "You know me, Joe!"

"Is that you?" I yells across to him.

"Yeah!" yells the red-head. "This is me! Get me in, Joe!"

He plows through and I grab him and rush him up-stairs, and into our dressing-room.

"Thanks awfully, Joe," he says. "I won't forget this!"

"Shake it up!" I says. "Peel off your clothes. There goes the bell for the last round and we go on next!"

I catch his coat and pull it off him. He wants to converse, but I am in a hurry. It looks like we will be massacred this night, but I am going through with it. I never run out on a fight in my life, and I am not going to let this bird spoil my game record.

"You know best, Joe," he says, and goes to stripping.

"Been fighting lately?" I chats, pulling him into his tights.

"No, Joe," he says. "Not since this morning. That lump on my head is where my mother called me for breakfast this A.M."

"Start tonight," I says. "Be very mean with the 'Memphis Murderer.' You are getting into the fight-game right. If you will keep jumping back into the ring you will stop him sure, and that will give you a grand start. Stop him one fist at a time, and do not get down-hearted. He has nothing but a punch; if he misses you with his right you will smell flowers, and if he connects you will get the bouquet! You are all to the lilies now, believe me!"

"Bring on that dish, Joe!" yells the manager.

"On the fire!"

"Why, Joe," argues the red-head as I am running him along, "we left my pants back there. I left something in my pocket, Joe. All I got! Somebody will crook it."

We come into the arena. It is full of patrons. You know the old Red Mitt out in Butte, Montana. They have the loft over that big car-barn.

I run my boy down the aisle. He still wants to talk.

"Listen to me, Joe," he says. "I do not like to be seen without my pants. If it is all the same I would rather take a seat further back. I could see good back there."

I don't pay attention to him, but hustle him right along and run him up against the ring. From what I hear of this Memphis Murderer it is not worth while to pay much attention to what my boy says, as it won't mean anything in a very short time.

"Here I can see great, Joe," he says, putting his elbows on the floor of the ring and resting. "Thanks awfully, old-timer!"

"Get up there, Billy," I orders, trying to get a shoulder under him. "Jump up there and fight for your life!"

"Ss-sh!" he says, looking around. "Don't let anybody hear you talk like that, Joe. I promised my poor old mother this A.M. that I would never fight again so long as I lived. My mother, Joe."

"You promised your mother?" I says.

"Yes. I was on my back, and she had a flat-iron when she asked me to promise. Feel that lump, Joe."

I get a very mean feeling. Once I bawled a fellow in a barroom and asked him to please come outside, just a minute, and he gets up and comes on outside, and I had the same kind of a feeling when I see him getting up. Loose and bewildered.

"Look here, fellow," I says. "You're Billy Dugan, aren't you? Please, fellow—you're Billy Dugan?"

"Who?" he says. "Me? Not at all, Joe. Whatever give you such a strange opinion? I just hollered at you down-stairs so you would take me in to see the fights. Let's sit down here. I wish I had my pants, Joe, honest I do. I don't feel just right. Got a pill? I got a pack of butts in them trousers, and some bandit will get to them and crook them. It ain't right, Joe, to leave my pants alone like that. Run back and get them, will you? What do you say?"

Can you beat it?

"Listen fellow," I says. "Don't feel bashful without those pants; they'll throw a sheet over you in about ten minutes! Get up there now and spoof with Hooley the Memphis Murderer. Don't you see him waiting for you in his corner? Don't worry. You're all dated up right now for the rest of your life!"

He stretches his neck at Hooley. He had a neck like a forearm and his head was the same size as his fist. He could pull a kid glove over his brains.

"Waiting for me?" he asks, pointing himself out. "You're wrong, Joe. Never saw him in my life!"

"Waiting for you," I says. "So's eight hundred other gents and patrons in this club. You fight Hooley or you got to fight the whole crowd. If they can't lick you I will! What's your answer?"

He looks at the house. He counts some, and then gives himself up.

"I'll fight Hooley," he says. "If you'll keep the rest of them from jumping on, Joe. You're the only friend I got, Joe. Look here—do I get a ring-side seat for fighting him?"

"That's up to you," I encourage him. "Grab the one you like best as you're passing by after Hooley lands his sock! Hold on to it tight, or he's liable to knock you back in to a fifty-center!"

"I guess I won't fight him," he says, losing heart. "I'll take on the crowd. Hooley hits too hard!"

"Go on, kid," I says, patting him on the back. "He can't hurt you! I was only stringing. Hit him a good punch and he'll run home crying."

"No kidding, Joe?" he says, brightening up.

"On the level!"

He crawls through the ropes, and starts for Hooley. I am behind him to trip him if he changes his mind. I collar him just in time and shove him into his seat.

He throws out his arms, and grins at the patrons.

"Now I can see great!"

"That's only at first," I comforts. "That's stage fright. Wait till you get going with Hooley, and you won't see a thing! You'll sleep good tonight—mark my words!"

The big bum. The referee calls him, and I shove him away. Out he goes.

"Hooley, the Memphis Murderer, in this corner," announced the referee. "In this corner Billy Dugan."

"I'm Billy Dugan's brother," chirps a sport in the gallery. "Which one of them is him— Hey, fellow! You wait until Billy catches you. 'At's all I say."

"Go on, kid," I heartens him. "He can't hurt you."

Now that the end is approaching I feel friendly for my boy. Besides when I look at this Memphis boy I figure it will be quite painless.

This Memphis person is a picture. He is some scenery. He looks like the gas-house smoke-stack on a still day. Some smoke. The red-head sees him close this time and he leaves him standing there with the referee and comes back to me and whispers behind his hand.

"On the level he can't, Joe? I wouldn't like to be mistook about this."

"On the level!" I says. "Are you calling me a liar?"

The red-head is perfectly satisfied, and he is waving to me and having a little laugh, and not noticing that somebody is ringing a bell.

The Murderer steps back, and does footwork around my red-head. Then he takes a wind-up seeing that there's nobody on, and puts all he has on his fist, and shoots it over. Bam-m!

Honest, he hits that red-head so hard it hurts *me!* I am not a person who loves horrors and accidents, and when I hear that old gong go I think of an ambulance, and I try to look away. But I wasn't quick enough this time. Oof—some sock!

Only a short right-field cheats the dinge out of a homer. The red-head dashes up to the ropes, and bounces back. There he is sitting in the middle of the ring, and the referee counting up. He comes down facing his corner, else he would never have found me again unless he had the brains of a pigeon, which he has not.

He looks at me sadly.

"You're wrong, Joe," he mumbles.

"Go on, kid," I advises him, pleased to see signs of life. "He can't hurt you!"

Well, this red-head is like many people. They don't never believe what they find out for themselves, but only what people tell them. The only dough they make all their life is by working for it, but they don't believe that for a minute, and they are always snooping around for an inside tip. I am buying a flock of oil stocks off a Wall Street man one day, and he tells me the very same thing. He says if people will stick to hard work and saving their dough, and quit taking bum steers, and buy a good oil-stock they will wear diamonds. He had some beauts.

So my boy takes my word, and gets up from the floor, and in runs the shine to finish him. And my boy ups with his foot, and takes that shine on the belt, and drapes that shine on his leg, and kicks him clean across the ring. A howl goes up. Not from the shine; his howl was flattened.

"Warned!" says the referee to me. "Warned!"

This time the shine comes in watching my boy's foot-work. Before then he is standing up like an Englishman, head back, body erect, and one arm out. Now he walks over with one hand on his stomach, and bending down to inspect where all that kick comes from. He gets a good paste on the nose. It is a waste of time to paste a shine on the nose, but it shows my boy's good will. Right on the beezer— Laugh?

The shine gets aggravated.

He takes my boy's red-head and tucks it under his arm for comfort, and makes arrangements to smooth out his face, meanwhile assisting my boy to his feet, so that if he drops he will pull his head off. When the shine fixes things this way he feels at home immediately, and he grins with anticipation of a good time, like a surgeon carrying an ax in a hospital.

I see my boy open his mouth, and he gets his teeth sunk in each side of the shine's best rib, and then he begins to masticate, and try to bite it out. The shine lets out an awful bellow, and it frightens my boy, and he opens his mouth and drops to the floor as the shine is sick of holding him up.

"Warned!" says the referee to me very severely. "Warned!"

What's that?

Now listen to me. Maybe you are down to the Red Mitt Athletic Club in the old days, and maybe you are not. I'm not arguing that. But you never produce down there, do you? Then you don't know. They don't disqualify fighters down at the Red Mitt in the old days unless they do something against the rules. The way they figure it there is no percentage in disqualifying the boys unless there is a piece of change in it for the management, but nobody will fight there in the old days or produce unless he gets his piece of change first, so where is the percentage?

Having their money safe the boys will just as soon go home as not, so the way it works out if they will disqualify boys then there will be nothng but foul tactics. But the audience will not go home, will they? Not in Fleischman's Alley, they won't.

By the time they stanch up the shine that is round one.

"Am I doing good, Joe?" says the red-head.

"You done great!" I says. "Go on out now and finish your supper!"

They ring the bell.

The Murderer has been thinking things over. He leaps and bounds around my boy, now here and now there, like an old gentleman going to take a totter in Central Park and crossing Columbus Circle in the traffic to get to it. He made my boy dizzy. Then he hauls off and springs that wallop again. While it is on its way though he gets to noticing that it is drawing him nearer and nearer to my boy, and so he finally pulls away from that wallop and leaves it travel on by itself. Consequence is it hardly knocks the red-head off his feet.

Still even that gave pleasure to the patrons, who had been making remarks about my boy, and asking the shine to knock him cold and kicking and do them a favor.

He lay there, calm and peaceful. There is so much trouble in this world that I had a good mind to walk away and leave him flat.

"Nine!" says the referee—time-keeper

too he is—and then he stops to cough, and clear his throat, so as to get the last word exactly right.

"Go on, kid," I implores. "He can't hurt you!"

The red-head rolls over, grabs a post, and shins up it. He got up just in time. The referee is very strict, and he would have counted my boy out in another minute.

The shine is sitting in his corner, waiting to receive the returns. The referee sends him a flash.

"Fight!"

The shine comes out, and takes my boy by the back of his neck, holding him tight and standing clear of those feet. He starts to give him a course of kidney-blows. I couldn't see my boy to talk to him, and I shouldn't wonder if he thought some of those socks hurt him.

Luckily enough, in putting on my boy's right glove I forget to put his hand inside, but only run the laces over his fingers, figuring that we are entitled to our share of accidents, and if he takes a good swing at the shine and the glove slips off, and he lands with a bare fist—why, accidents will happen.

So now my boy throws back his right arm, and takes that shine by the ear. He digs in his nails, sets his feet, and starts to pull that ear clear of its cleats. He starts some of them, and is doing very well when the shine lets go of his neck. And gives a college-cry.

"Warned!" says the referee to me. Warned!"

That was round two.

"Listen, Joe," says my boy, sitting in his corner. "There's something very important I want to ask you to do for me, as I see that I will not be there to do it for myself. You're the only friend I got, Joe. Will you do me a favor, Joe, if it's the last time I ask you?"

His voice made me feel weak inside, and I wondered if I had done right by this poor boy. I got a conscience.

"Why, my lad," I says, feeling around for a handkerchief to blow my nose, "don't take on so. We all got to go sooner or later, boy. The last round comes for all of us. Keep hoping. But just in case—what is it you want me to do? A message to your old mother, I suppose. Or is it a sweet little girl who watches and waits for you? Let me have the address; I'll do it, lad."

"You promise me true, Joe?" he says, searching my face with his blue eyes.

"Yes," I says, clearing my throat. "I got a heart."

He smiled.

"Joe," he says, putting his arm around my shoulder with a tear in his eye, "will you *please* go back and get them pants?"

Can you imagine?

Well, sir, when that shine comes out again he has something up his sleeve. In his mitt, I mean. It is a razor. That is how it is with those dinges. They got no sense of fair play and good sportsmanship. I see another shine open it back for him. The Murderer has it open in his mitt, and I know that the next swing he takes at my boy he is going to miss the red-head, but my boy will look like he got a free shave and haircut in a barbers' school all the same.

"Foul!" I yells, breaking the ring. "Foul!"

"What do you mean foul, Joe?" says the referee to me with a hurt look. "Don't go to making cracks like that one, Joe. So long as I'm refereeing here there ain't going to be no fouls in this ring."

"Make him open his mitt," I claims. "Make him open his mitt!"

They did. They see the razor. The referee scratches his head. "It don't look regular, Joe," he admits, "and that's a fact. Wait a minute till I look it up. I never see nothing about razors in the rules, Joe. What is right?"

"Well, Peter," I argues, "it may not be a foul as fouls go, but it ain't gentlemanly conduct, is it? All these guys in this club are gentleman, and we don't propose to stand for any of this rowdy element. We win the fight!"

"What's your grounds?" says the referee. "Who did you lick?"

"Lynch him!" hollers some guys. "Who got a rope?"

"Fellow next to me over here got one," coughs another patron. "But he's smoked it nearly all up."

I walk over and give the Murderer a good kick in the shins.

"Listen," I says. "If I was you I'd quit. Some patrons just run out to borrow a neck-tie."

"He quits, Peter!" I sing out.

"Anybody else claiming this fight?" he announces to the audience. No answer. "All right, Joe. You win!"

We climb through the ropes. My red-head takes it on the loop for his pants. Worrying about that pack of cigarets, he was. He don't run so fast but what one member clouts him on the ear, and another member trips him up, and three members do a competition of fancy steps on him—heel-and-toe, Irish jig, and clog. They can't hold him. He keeps going. Me after him. Not too close.

He lams into the dressing-room with a sobbing cry of joy.

In comes three guys running with a rope. Peter Burgholzer, Milton Levy, and Fan McCool—three tough guys. Carrying it like a hose they are.

"Where is he?" they ask.

"There he is, boys," I point out. "There's the shine just getting out of the ring."

"He ain't him," they say. "We want that red-head. He's our bait. Our dollar was on the shine."

"Sorry," I says. "He blew."

"Friend of yourn?" they entice, offering to hang me for the time being.

"Get away," I say. "He went out that other door."

Off they hook it. I take after the red-head. He is fondling his pants.

"No time," I says, pulling him to the stairs. He grabs up some shoes and hats, and we jump down the stairs. Up the street we lam, and around the corner.

"Get into that hall-way and dress yourself," I says. "Good-by, fellow!"

"Here, Joe," he says, grabbing me. "You're not going to leave me like this, are you, after I battled all those people for you?"

I figured what he wanted. That's how it is with these preliminary boys—they're gold-diggers. That's why they don't get more fights, and maybe rise up in their profession. I hate a money-grabber. I peel off a dollar before he claws me out of my clothes, and I give it all to him. I didn't only collect twenty-five for the fight, and I need all I can make these hard times.

"What's this for, Joe?" he asks looking it over.

"For fighting," I says.

"On the level, Joe?" He can't believe his eyes. "For fighting? Easy money!"

"Why? What do you generally get for fighting?"

"Arrested. They are good sports back there. Let's go back and thank them."

"You go," I says. "Maybe they'll give you something else!"

"I tell you what we do," he says with a brilliant thought. "Let's eat. I ain't eat in I don't know when."

"I'll stick!" I agrees. "Lead on."

There's an all-night lunch-wagon. He dashes up the steps, and me after him. Right on his heels. He plants himself at the counter.

"Beans," he bays.

That's a fighting word. Beans is the staff of strife. Lots of good boys don't never touch anything else between bouts. I thought this red-head was just a dub, but the way he punished those beans made me wonder.

"But, listen!" I says, catching his elbow. "You ain't a regular prize-fighter, are you? Honest!"

He stops and takes out his dollar. He counts it.

"Sure I am!" he says. "But I usedn't to be, Joe. Not before tonight. I had a job. I drive mules up an alley for Hannigan the contractor. Narrow alley too, Joe. I quit that job today. The mules kick too much."

"Too tough going, was it? Made you quit."

"Who? Me? Not me, Joe. Hannigan fired me for kicking back. I kicked the stuffing out of them!"

"You want to be a regular pug?"

"Only so long as the jack comes easy!" he bargains.

I see I could use this youth. He should do in free-for-alls where you shake up five boys like poker-dice, roll them into a ring, and look and see what turns up. Most boys if they are knocked foolish will look glum, and wonder if they peeped in the right Dream-book, but when this red-head looks at me after Hooley connects he is only sorry for me that I should make an error.

"More beans!" I says. "This is on me!"

And I flipped out a dime.

He is a whaling big guy, only starved so long he is quite hollow. If I could catch him filled up I would have put him in my stable quick, and I got some awful good boys, but I got a heart and I can't endure them following me around, and asking me do they eat. But he looks good to me, outside of that appetite. He has good lines. And he got that dreamy look in his merry eyes like he hated the sight of ruin and misery unless it was his work.

There's two things a fighter has got to be very fond of if he ever expects to get his income out of the same class with college professors: Taking a smacking is one, and giving a smacking is the other. I never had any use for fighters who liked any more than them two, and neither has the patrons.

"How would you like to be a champ?" I asks, to quiet his nerves.

He has licked up the Bostons, and is flagging the counter-man.

"I would like another set of beans!" he says.

"Come around to see me tomorrow night," I says. "Meet me at Kerrigan's café. I know a place where they will give you beans for nothing if you will do a little job of fighting."

"Watch for me!" he says.

I blow.

THE next night I am looking them over outside Kerrigan's. I hear somebody holler.

"There he is, boys!"

Bingo!

I am laying on the sidewalk, and the red-head is holding up my head. A policeman is shooing away innocent bystanders.

"It was a runaway truck loaded with paving-stones," I say to the policeman in feeble tones. "It was making forty miles, and jumped the curb behind my back."

"You don't want to make no complaint?" asks the policeman. "Then get away from here or I'll run you in."

The red-head picks me up and totes me into a drug-store. There is a dish-faced lady sitting behind a little stand soliciting passers-by for starving Cubans, and the red-head props me up against her stand. It is a good idea. I am in a charmed circle, and nobody won't come within six feet of them Cubans. They walk well around that stand, looking away and talking business. I get air and I come to.

The red-head comes back mopping his mouth.

"Listen, Joe," he begs. "Could you do another dive like that last one?"

"What is the idea?" I ask.

"Two good guys out there give me a pocket-flask full of whisky," he says. "And just now the owner of this drug-store give me another glass of hooch, and I am very fond of such."

"That was for me!" I cry.

"Was it, Joe?" he says, surprized. "Sorry, Joe. I had no notion. Well, that is too bad. Let's go get them eats, Joe! I got a great appetite now!"

I could have socked that red-head. But I think I will take him where he will get socked to my heart's content.

"Come on along," I says. "I will not cheat you out of this now for anything!"

It is nine o'clock. He gives me a shoulder, and we do a three-legged race up the street.

"Yes," he explains. "You told that policeman true, Joe. It was an accident. I am telling some fellows in my neighborhood this morning that I will get free eats for giving some guy a slamming, and eight of them gorillas say they will slam too, and they come up here with me, which was perfectly all right as I figure we will thus make short work and get to the eats. They are very anxious to please and make good, but they are not all so bright as me. And when I see you and say 'There he is, boys!' they all take a running jump to earn credit and get in their sock. And that is how you come to figure you are hit by a truckload of Belgian blocks, Joe."

"Turn in here," I says.

And we steer up steps and into Kelcey's restaurant where the Black Sheep are holding a beef-steak up in the Hayloft.

The Hayloft is full of sheep with butcher's aprons tied around their necks, and gravy to the elbows. They are sitting at wooden tables and smoking from their heads from gulching top-sirloins. They have a stage at one end of the Hayloft for the talent.

"Just in time," says the producer who is putting on the show for this stag. "I see you bring your boy in his character. That is very excellent."

I will explain to you that there is to be a free-for-all between five bums. They do not need to be bums really, only they must dress like bums. That is the artistic idea. They can be doctors or lawyers or authors or what not, only they must look like bums to begin. And afterward they can look like gentlemen again, if they wish and if they can.

So we sit there and are entertained by an actor who recites, "The Face on the Bar-Room Floor." It is very sad, and the Black Sheep weep tears when they dwell on the thought of that good old barroom passed away.

"Who do I lick?" asks the red-head as the actor passes away in grief, and bums start to flood the stage.

"Well, it is like this," I explain. "I am your friend, and I want to make sure you eat, but I do not know if you can lick any particular person. And so I arrange to give you your pick. You see them four guys up there? Well, if you will lick any one of them four guys you will win the battle."

"Thanks, Joe," he says. "Awfully."

"I will advise," I says, "that you fight the four of them first for a little while, and after you master their styles you will be able to pick out the set-up, and give him your best attention."

"Will they let me do that?" he asks doubtfully.

"Why, sure!" I says. "It is an unfair advantage to take of them, but this is not a regular prize-fight. I am breaking you into the fight-game easy."

"Joe," he says, squeezing my hand hard and looking away, "Joe—I—" but he was quite overcome. "I—I will not forget this night, Joe."

"I hope not," I says. "This bout will make you rich and famous, Red. Yes, you will need to show your face and stick out your cup! If the worse comes to the worse you can have a cute little mutt on a string and you can squeeze an accordeon and sing! You will be a marked man after this bout, or I miss my guess!"

Drink up my hooch, will he? The big rum.

"Let's go!" he yells, full of the old ambition.

"Remember you eat after!" I yells. "Not now! No plate-and-bridge work!"

The four bums are looking bashfully at each other, and moping around for a good chance to hand out a sock. My red-head breaks the ice. The biggest bum has picked his victim, and is watching him out of his eye carelessly for an opportunity to pole-ax him when he is distracted by the scene of revelry. My red-head starts to sock at this biggest bum while he is still leaving me and by the time he gets up on the stage and across he has rolled up quite some punch. He plants the whole roll on the side of the biggest bum's neck.

And then there was three.

The other bums notice the absence of the big fellow, who is planted head-first in a bucket of mashed potatoes hard by, and they hand out three nice biffs. As luck will have it none of them has picked out the biggest bum to biff for natural reasons, so none of this good biffing goes to waste. The distribution of prizes causes some hard feeling. The three bums get very disappointed and they begin to sock right and left. It is not so very scientific, but it gives much pleasure to the Black Sheep for all that, and they cheer considerably.

Well, my red-head is not taking part in all this merry-making, as he has planted his sock, and is only waiting around to pluck a meal. But one bum who has drawn his ration and found it a little too much for him and laid down to digest it now sees a way to do a noble deed and write his name in history so he arises quietly and makes a note of it behind my red-head's ear. My red-head does a dive.

At this moment a bum is delivering a package at the wrong address and he springs back and lands with two feet on my boy's mush. He feels safe on first, and so he dances up and down on base. Another bum is running for a doctor, and he has lost his way, so he runs up and down my boy and stamps with much impatience. Now the way things are at one of these festivals each bum will get ten dollars, but the winner will get two more to buy himself a diamond belt, and in those days two dollars is two dollars. So I was afraid that these playmates would do something thoughtless and hurt my boy's record, so I speak up.

"Go on, kid," I yell. "He can't hurt you."

My boy then arises much refreshed from his slumber, and dusts those bums off him. He swings his sinker around his head and lets fly for a big fish, figuring that if he gets this one and two more he will have four, which is a mess.

There is a comrade beside him who is also engaged in pastime, and—as you have often witnessed of a Fourth of July on a fishing-steamer out of New York—this neighbor takes my boy's cast between the lamps. There is nothing else for him to do but to buy his fish in the store, for he is done for the day. So this bum goes down below.

Which would leave two, only a bum has been very busy in a corner, and when he has decently disposed the remains and closed the eyes he gets up to see what he inherited. My boy climbs this bum, and drives him with whip and spur. He is coming down the stretch yards ahead of the field when he puts too much on a welt, and his steed goes down in a heap.

There is a bum left—but it is my boy.

We win.

Well, you may believe me when I say

that my boy does not even have to collar me this time to get his piece. He has done wonderful for a beginner, and I pat him on the back as I hand him his dollar.

He looks like he stuck his head into a bag full of cats to see who is there.

"Is it tonight yet?" he says, as we push into the street.

"So far, Red," I says. "But we're due for a change soon."

"It is a great life," he says, yawning. "Being a prize-fighter. I am afraid though it is not steady enough for me, Joe. I promise my mother that I will work steady, for you are bound to get in mischief when you are idle. Do you think we could pick a fight between now and bed-time so as to keep our mind occupied?"

"You want to fight again tonight?" I asks.

"You got to rest up," I argues. "In two days you knock out five men, and you better save some for a rainy day. If you will go on knocking them so swift you will crab the business. Regular prize-fighters always rest up a long while between bouts, and go into moving pictures. So you better rest up and build up your health and break training for a while. You could go into the movings meanwhile. Here's ten cents."

"You know best, Joe," he says, shaking his head.

WELL, sir, I put this bird on in free-for-alls for nearly a month, and in that time he knocks out fifty-seven men. You see, we can not get bouts every night, although I am working hard all the time. They can't beat us! No matter how hard they sock him I will never give up, but I will go right on and give my cry, so we outgame them one and all.

He learns considerable science too, and he fills out something wonderful, having limitless beans. This gives him much strength in his sock, and the consequence is that the boys who fight free-for-alls get to observing that when my red-head is one of the merry group his four comrades are liable to miss the next meal or two on account of still being under the spell of his sock. They do not mind being knocked out, for such is the life of a fighter, but they do not wish to be knocked past any meals.

So they get down on my red-head, and when they are bid to a party they get to asking who else is invited. And if the producer is wise, and suddenly springs my red-head on them in the midst of their sports they will let begones be bygones and the whole four of them will cluster around my boy and start to lambaste him good and proper.

But even that don't settle the argument, for my boy slams back at them, and while they can all hit him at once they can not all divide his sock among them share and share alike, and one member has always to take it all, and it knocks him past a meal.

I admit we have some fierce battles, and sometimes my boy's nose points to the east and sometimes to the west, and if he will put on his hat it will fit him fine in places, but in other places his head does not fill it out. But those things would not worry us so much if only the free-for-all union does not hand my boy the black spot, and announce that he is all through. And they state that they will not fight with him any more in any event notsoever.

Well, that puts a crimp in it. Two days go by and we do not fight at all, and my boy has eat up the whole eighteen dollars which he has made during the month, and I know that very soon he will try to touch me for a quarter.

So I take the bull by the horns.

"Red," I says to him, "you have got to quit the fighting game."

"How is this, Joe?" he asks.

"Well, it is this way," I tell him. "You are got too much of a reputation, that is what is the matter. So long as you are an unknown you can get bouts, and coax a batch of boys in for a pasting, but now you have pasted them all, and they are all shy of your sock. So I guess you will have to go back to work, Red."

"It did seem too good to last," he admits sorrowfully. "It was just a beautiful dream. That is what it is to have a reputation. Well, I will go back to work, Joe. And when I fight after this I will be an unknown. There is lots of good scrapping down around the mines in my neighborhood, so I guess I will hang around down there of evenings and sock guys getting off of freight cars, and seeing the town, and slumming parties, and all such as that."

And he props his hat on his head, and shakes my hand farewell, and walks away.

Well, I am producing right along after that for quite a time, but things do not break very good. If I have a good boy then some wise gent will see him in action, and will come around with a ham sandwich in his kick and lure him away from me. I am building up my reputation too, and the way things get to be I can not get any more good boys into my stable, and the clubs will not give me any more bouts.

So things look pretty poor.

At this time Jim Jeffries retires on account he has such a sock that nobody will take it, just like my red-head. For the first time in history then there is several champions of the world, and they all hold their crown for quite a period, being careful not to fight each other or do anything rash. There was Marvin Hart, and there was Tommy Burns, and there was Philadelphia Jack O'Brien, and two others. And anybody that knocked one of these birds silly could be a champion of the world too. Or at any rate nobody else could be the champion without battling him, and that is the same thing.

Now, these five champions of the world would not fight each other, but went around picking soft spots. They would go out in the bushes and invite one and all of the country people to step up and sample their sock, and would offer to pay money to any hick who came back for a second helping. The old John L. stuff. You remember big Jim tried it on in his time.

I am over in Hoboken one night, having a date with a bird that I am going to touch for ten dollars. The date is for ten o'clock in the morning, but he is not there on the dot, and I am a man who likes people punctual, so as he does not turn up by nine o'clock that evening I think I will stand him up and serve him right, and so I walk away from the corner.

I walk up Hudson Street, and there is a theater. One of these champions of the world is inside taking on the audience, and offering twenty-five dollars to any guy who will stay one round.

Well, I think I will like to see the champion knocking out fungoes, but I am not in funds to go in and hire a box. As luck will have it, I do not have to hire one, as I find one in the next lot—a dry-goods box it is—and I stand this up against a side window and rest my nose on the sill. It is Summer and the window is open. So there I am as comfortable as you please, so long as nobody lays up against me with a bale-stick.

The champion is walking up and down with his stomach stuck out and knotted muscles, showing his great development to the audience. And they are piling guys like cordwood on one side of the stage, that the champion has just treated to his sock.

"Who's next?" hollers the champion's manager. "Twenty-five dollars to any gent to stay one round with the champion of the world."

And the audience gives a well-bred laugh.

And then I hear somebody pipe up and say—

"Have you got the money with you?"

"Deposited with the management of this theater," announces the champion's producer.

And with that a guy comes lamming down the aisle and hops up to the stage—and who should it be but my red-head.

He grabs for the gloves.

"You said I get twenty-five dollars, fellow," he says to the producer, who is lacing him in. "Don't forget that now, or I'll paste you too."

And he takes a running jump at the champion.

The champ was good. He was clever and he had a real sock, but there's people that says he didn't like to take it. However he didn't have to, as a general rule.

He blocks my boy's rush, and pushes him away. Then he walks around him cleverly, and starts to jab him. The audience is pleased, as there is considerable kick in those jabs, and they start the red-head to bleeding. Of course I know they are nothing compared to some of the pastings we take in the old days, but the audience think they are very painful.

Two minutes pass, and then the producer tips the champ off it is time to clean up. And the champ sets himself, and my boy walks into one frightful wallop. Smack on the jaw.

Well, there is only one thing to do in such a case, and that is take a dive.

My boy went south, rolled over on his back, and prepared to pass the night.

The producer was counting. The champ knew from the lovely feel of his mitt that all was over. He stepped away and opened a conversation with the audience.

"Eight," sings the producer.

I pushed my head through the window. I couldn't help it.

"Go on, kid," I yells. "He can't hurt you."

The red-head starts like a hand that hears the old factory whistle. He looks at the clock, and sees he has forty seconds to get to the works. He bounds from that floor like he has legs in his neck.

The champion turns and throws up his hands, but it wouldn't have done him no good if he throws up breast-works! The old sock that lays fifty-seven varieties of battlers low in a month is rolling his way! It pushes his gloves out of the way, and imprints a chaste kiss between his eyes!

Bam-m!

Down he goes! The red-head runs right over him, trying to pull that wallop back like a lady drawing in on a runaway with the bit in his teeth!

They counted the champ out. They could have counted out the other four champs too if they were on the job. There was enough for everybody. It was one ample sock.

When they decide that the ex-champ is quite dead for the time being they look around for my red-head.

"Where's the new champion of the world?" they sing out.

"He just went outside!" some guy hollers.

I jump down from the box, and run around front. I see a big guy lamming down the road. It is my red-head! I take after him.

I chase him about two miles—all the way down to the New York ferry. I catch him in the ferry-house.

"Hello, Red!" I shouts, grabbing him to stand up, I am so winded.

"Hello, Joe," he says, shoving his hand behind his back. I catch the flash of the green. He is still clutching on to that twenty-five dollars.

"Red, old pal," I says, "you're the new champion of the world."

"You're a liar," he says. "That's wasn't me!"

"Now listen to reason," I argues. "Come on back to the theater. You have K. O.'d the champ, and your picture will be in all the papers tomorrow. We will make a million dollars! I will manage you again. Moving pictures, vaudeville engagements, and everything!"

"What is a champion?" says the awful dumb-bell.

"A champion is a guy that can lick everybody."

"And does everybody know it?"

"Why, sure they do! That's why he's the champion!"

"That's enough," says this dough-head. "I could lick everybody once before—you remember, Joe? So long as they don't know it I am hunky-dory, and I make easy jack, but so soon as I am the champion then I can't get a fight, and I got to hang around the mines, and coax guys to take a pasting for nothing! Now I am unknown again, and I make twenty-five dollars as easy as rolling off a roof!"

"Listen, Red," I beg him with all my heart. "What's twenty-five dollars? You will make more than that every day in the week if you let me manage you again!"

"*More* than twenty-five dollars?" he laughs. "That's enough from you!"

"Hurry up there, you guys, if you're going aboard!" yells the ferry-hand, rolling the door shut that lets you out to the boat.

The red-head plants his foot on my vest, and shoves me forty feet, so I come down sitting on the platform of a weighing-machine.

"Pass one," he yells, and darts through the closing doorway. The ferry-hand slaps it shut.

I never see him again.

Can you imagine?

* * *

THERE was loud shouting outside the soda-water shack. A band began to play. The crowd gulped its sodas and rushed into the air. Mr. Rickard had opened the doors of his new stadium. The Carpentier-Dempsey fight was come.

I arose and hurried toward the exit. The tout ran after me and caught my elbow.

"Get me in, fellow, will you? I want to see the champ."

"In there?" I scoffed with a knowing wink. "The champion isn't in there yet. He is going to stand outside the doors in the crowd until the bell rings. You know the champion when you see him, don't you? Stand here on the steps, and pick him out, and the rest will be easy!"

"On the level?" he breathed. "There is going to be stage-business, is there? This is the inside tip?"

"Absolutely. I just got it today, from one who knows. Good-by, and thanks for the story."

"So long, fellow," he waved, releasing my arm, and looking through the mass of struggling fans with eager and shining eyes.

War Wampum

A Five-Part Story

Part II.

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "The White Dawn," "Pay Gravel," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

MONTREAL had fallen and the Lilies were vanishing from the strongholds of Canada. Left without the support of their French allies, the Indians banded together to stand against the now dominant English. Pontiac directed the reign of terror and slaughter along the forest paths of the Alleghanies.

From Sandusky two forest-runners, Enoch Meekly and James Ballou, traveled eastward in desperate haste to locate and warn Colonel Bouquet that Presq'Isle, Le Bœuf and Venango had fallen. Night overtook them two miles from Bushy Run, where their friend Steve Marks and his family lived; and, made uneasy by the prevalence of so many savages in the woods, the two runners went on at fresh speed.

They approached the place cautiously and found what they feared—a crowd of Indians besieging the Marks cabin. They concealed themselves and saw Steve trying to make peace with the red chief, and killed treacherously from behind in consequence.

There were five other white men defending the cabin, and these decided to attempt an escape to the Byerly house a short distance away. Meekly and Ballou managed to join them; and the party, thus strengthened, retreated in the darkness on guard against the pursuing devils. Ballou learned that Marks' daughter, Nell, had been captured.

"Good God!" he babbled.

No one dared think what would happen to her in the hands of the savages.

The little band reached the Byerly place and spent a hideous night beating off the enemy.

Meanwhile one of the white men, Hance Whit, was frantic to begin the rescue of Nell, and, as a serious rival of Ballou, he fell into a hot quarrel which endangered the lives of all of them. The Indians started a fresh attack; but suddenly they scattered. The whites gave a shout of triumph and rushed out to meet Captain Joseph Dingly and a company of rangers who had come to the rescue.

The party now split up, Whit and Enoch going with Dingly and his men in search of the Marks girl, and Ballou with four others pushing on to carry word to Bouquet and to look for Mrs. Byerly—who was reported to have fled with her small children along the Fort Ligonier road but a short while ago. They saw nothing of the mother but had several encounters with the savages, which resulted in the loss of Smiley and Rickards. Ballou and his remaining companion continued on to the fort and arrived unhurt after running the gantlet of another war-party. The Byerlys had got in safely. Ballou told his news to the officer in command and then made ready, after a short rest, to proceed to his next objective—Bedford and Carlisle.

En route he neared the Shawnee Cabins and met an old Indian wearing a fearful medicine-mask. Black Beaver was alone and starving, and when Ballou gave him food he showed that he was likely to prove a valuable friend. He consulted his medicine and said that he would go with the white man. At first Ballou was suspicious.

"Some trick," he muttered, but he consented nevertheless.

They were within a mile of Bedford when they came upon a number of haymakers fighting for their lives against an onslaught of savages. Black Beaver donned his mask, and the attackers fled.

The whites then hurried to collect their dead and set out for the fort. Ballou was well received and reported to Captain Louis Ourry, who had charge of a pitifully small garrison there.

When he and the captain were by themselves Ourry spoke of the desperate situation the place was in.

"Tell Bouquet I'll hold out as long as I live," he said.

"War Wampum," copyright, 1922, by Hugh Pendexter.

CHAPTER III

THE SHADOW DEEPENS

THE scenes at Shippensburg were even more distressing than any the two travelers had seen at Ligonier and Bedford. More than a thousand men, women, and children had sought refuge in the settlement, and there was not a shed, barn, or cellar that did not have its quota of fugitives. Every house had been filled by the first influx. Very few of the settlers had brought any food with them beyond what they had happened to snatch up when beginning their dangerous flight. The situation was especially sad in the case of little children.

On the outskirts of the settlement Ballou fell in with one Patrick Clennin, a trader acquaintance, who said the roads leading to Lancaster and Philadelphia were crowded by terrified refugees. Growing crops, mills, and houses had been destroyed over a wide area. Ballou's first thought on beholding the misery of the homeless families was to wonder that, in very desperation, the men did not seize arms and go out and seek the enemy, and die, if need be, to rid their lands of the red terror. But Braddock's fate was in the minds of all; and where there wasn't apathy there was a frenzy of fear. And again, never in the history of the border had the Indians displayed such insolent courage in carrying out their raids. The battle of the Monongahela had left a deep impress on the red mind as well as on the white.

The meeting with Clennin was doubly fortunate. A mob of half-starved men were for killing Black Beaver, and only the trader's interference saved the Conestoga and Ballou from a deadly fight. Clennin advised Ballou to press on at once and loaned him a horse to ride as far as Carlisle. So without pausing in the forlorn town Ballou rode east, the Conestoga trotting at his side.

Ballou now discovered another phenomenon: Instead of the public mind improving as he advanced toward Carlisle he found the tension and hysteria increasing. Depending on hearsay the settlers were accepting and believing the wildest rumors. Detroit had fallen, a woman shrieked at him, and all but the French habitants had been burned at the stake. She called him a "witless fool" when he endeavored to set her right. Fort Pitt had fallen and the garrison to the last man had been massacred. Niagara had been attacked and might be destroyed at any hour.

Pontiac was bringing a huge army of victorious Ottawas, Potawatomi and Chippewas to push the Pennsylvania frontier behind the Alleghanies. Sir William Johnson had lost control of the Iroquois, even his Mohawks taking the path, and the warriors of the Long House even now were on the way to raid down the entire length of the Susquehanna.

What struck Ballou as being very ironical was the fact that the frightened people had not heard, even in rumor, anything about the fall of Venango, Presqu'Isle, and Le Boeuf. He enlightened them none, as their burden of dismal beliefs was heavy enough already. But, oh for a hundred Virginians in their fringed hunting-shirts, or a like number of Pennsylvania backwoodsmen in their sober garb! If anything, the disorder and terror along the Carlisle road was worse than in any section the forest-runner had passed through.

The explanation was simple enough, although Ballou did not comprehend it until long afterward. At each isolated cabin the settlers saw only what they saw. As their direful experiences were repeated from the Forbes road to the settlements the full accumulation of disaster was bandied about and murders committed fifty miles away became so many imminent dangers.

Repeatedly voices were raised in anger against Black Beaver; but with soft words, or a show of authority, and, sometimes, an approach to flight, Ballou kept the road open for his dusky companion. More than once a man would clutch at the horse's bridle as if to appropriate him.

"The Indians are not near. You are in no danger. I am an express. Do not bother me," Ballou would shout.

Once he was compelled to dismount and fight brutally in order to retain his borrowed mount.

What was more distressing was to have a man kneel before him and wildly plead:

"Oh, my God! Do not leave us! The savages will be here in a minute."

Then there was the monotonous plaint:

"We're all going to be killed and sculped! All going to be killed and sculped!"

The report that the savages were raiding through the Juniata country and along the borders of Cumberland County were true enough. Also it was true that Shearman's valley, and that of the Tuscarora, had lost all semblance of human occupancy except as charred logs told of former homes. Some two thousand families had fled to the settlement and had brought their hunger with them. From the mountains to the Susquehanna the enemy had made almost a clean sweep.

As the travelers neared Carlisle they repeatedly heard it stated that the fate of the colonies depended upon Colonel Henry Bouquet and his few hundreds of troops. When Ballou upbraided a strong fellow for not volunteering under Bouquet he was passionately told—

"If you'd seen what I've seen, mister, you wouldn't be so gallus about fighting Injuns."

This bowing the head without a show of resistance was reminiscent of some of the German Dunkards in Great Cove, following the Braddock disaster, who would say, "God's will be done!" as they watched the butchery of their kinsfolk.

Carlisle was in great confusion. Every fresh arrival of fugitives added to the stock of horrors being repeated throughout the town. As Ballou dismounted to inquire for Colonel Bouquet's headquarters a woman wailed—

"How can they be beat by Bouquet's little army when General Braddock was licked with a big army?"

How, indeed!

Ballou loudly proclaimed that Black Beaver was a friendly Indian, one who would serve as scout for Bouquet. The Conestoga was offered no violence, but the gaze directed toward him was far from being amiable. Ballou shook off several frantic men, who were hungry to hear more horrors, and finally was shown the building where Bouquet was striving to organize his campaign.

Leaving the Conestoga to watch his horse he approached and was passed readily enough by the soldier in scarlet coat after he had announced he was an express. Without any delay he was shown into a small room where Colonel Bouquet was checking up his quartermaster's lists.

Bouquet was in the prime of life, of imposing physique, and possessing a presence that was most pleasing. The little room was the only spot in town penetrated by Ballou where quiet and composure reigned.

"The sentry says you are Jarvis Ballou, an express with important news," greeted Bouquet. "You must be weary. Be seated and I'll hear you shortly. I came here expecting to find supplies awaiting my men. Instead I have found starvation and am now trying to decide just how much more I can squeeze from my supplies to feed the hungry."

He worked for a minute or two, then summoned an ensign and gave him a paper and directed him to see that the rations were properly distributed.

Then he turned to Ballou and lifted his brows.

"It's bad news," Ballou began.

"Of course. Nothing but bad news comes over the Ligonier road." Then lowering his voice he mournfully queried, "Is it Pitt or Ligonier that's fallen?"

"Neither. But Presqu' Isle, Le Boeuf, and Venango have."

"Bad. Very bad. But, thank God, it's neither Pitt nor Ligonier." And the broad shoulders squared and the head was thrown back. "Will Ligonier hold out till I get there, Ballou?"

"That depends on how soon you can make the distance, colonel. If the Indians attack in force before you reach the fort it will fall."

"Ligonier must hold out. If that goes, then Pitt goes. Then no white man will be safe west of the Susquehanna. Do you think some of my Highlanders, of the Forty-second, could get through to Ligonier in advance of the army? They know nothing of the woods and usually get lost if they stray from camp. But they will fight to the death; and with the bayonet, if allowed their choice. Behind a stockade they will answer for many of the red devils."

"They might get through by keeping clear of the road and using the by-paths," dubiously replied Ballou. "But you must have woodsmen to guide them, or they'll be ambushed within ten miles after leaving Shippensburg."

Bouquet called in a lieutenant and ordered him to start thirty of the bare-legged men of the Forty-second—the famous Black Watch—for Ligonier under suitable guides.

"They must go by stealth, by unfrequented paths," he told the officer. "And, in God's mercy, see that the guides are capable and stanch. You will tell the men they are to hold Ligonier until I come along. I shall leave sixty of our sick to do garrison duty in their place."

After the officer had departed Bouquet quietly explained:

"That cuts the Forty-second down to two hundred and twelve men. Of the Seventy-seventh Highlanders I have a hundred and thirty-three. Almost all my force is just back from the West Indies and are in miserable condition. Sixty of them I hauled here in wagons; they are too sick to walk. With five hundred men in a wretched state of health I must do what General Braddock failed to do with three times that number, and against a foe very much stronger and infinitely braver than the army of 'Fifty-five contended with. What do you think of my chances, Ballou?"

Ballou stared at him uneasily a minute; then cried—

"You'll do it!"

He believed his words. Bouquet inspired in him a confidence such as only one other man on the frontier could inspire—Major George Washington. Ballou did not believe that the Seventy-seventh and the Forty-second Highlanders could save Pitt, or even Ligonier; but he did believe that Colonel Henry Bouquet could and would.

Added to Bouquet's other excellent qualties was the prime essential of woodcraft. He could outguess the red man and beat him at his own game. The panic-stricken refugees outside the window were right at least in one particular—all did depend upon Colonel Bouquet.

He engaged Ballou in further talk, questioning him shrewdly about the physical conditions at Bedford and Ligonier. Then he suddenly asked—

"Do you find the people afraid of Pontiac, or of Indians in general?"

"I heard no talk about Pontiac among our settlers, colonel. If Pontiac was known to be dead the Indians would keep up the fight, I believe. George Croghan still insists the French urged Pontiac to make the war. I say the Senecas began it."

Bouquet tapped his long fingers on the table and thoughtfully remarked:

"It's upon us, anyway. Some of the French welcome it, especially those who hope to draw the fur trade down the Mississippi. I know that New Orleans has been sending arms to Pontiac. But truth is, Pontiac took up and is using the plan that the Delawares, Shawnees, and Senecas abandoned when they learned their scheme had been discovered. The uprising has been brewing these two years, if not three."

A great clamor in the open street drew them to the window.

"More settlers with disturbing stories to tell," sighed Bouquet.

A HORSEMAN, his mount in a lather, reined in opposite the window and began haranguing a crowd of men and women. His words were confused at first, and neither the two men at the window nor the greater number of refugees could understand him. The people began yelling for him to speak louder. He waved his hand for silence and commenced all over again, and shouted:

"I am express from Bedford. Came through inside of twenty-four hours. Venango, Le Boeuf, and Presqu'Isle have been taken by the Injuns. Pontiac's men will be here soon!"

Shrieks from the women, shrill cries from the children, and exclamations of despair from the men greeted this dire intelligence. Colonel Bouquet thrust his head from the window and sternly cried:

"You, there on the horse, sirrah! What the —— do you mean riding in here and shouting out such news?"

"It's true, if you please, sir. I'm express from Bedford," the rider replied.

"Then your business is with me, not with a street mob. Your news is stale. I already have received it. You people calm yourselves. Pontiac's men will not come here. I march with my army very soon. We shall clear the country as we go. While Pitt and Ligonier hold out you'll have nothing here in Carlisle worse than short rations. The sooner some of you men enlist as scouts and guides the sooner we will make the country safe."

Shouts of rejoicing greeted this speech, but there was no rush of volunteers. It was sufficient for the people to know that Bouquet understood the situation and was prepared to meet it.

"Hurrah for Colonel Bouquet!" howled a giant of a fellow with a coal-black beard.

"Aye. That's very fine," sighed the colonel as he drew in his head and seated himself at the table. "But I wish they would do more cheering for their families and homes, and prove their good will by enrolling with me. Ballou, you have done the colonies a service. I need every man's help. I know I can count on you."

"I go now to find one Mistress Nell Marks, daughter of Stephen Marks, who was captured by Indians near Bushy Run. In attending to that business I will try to collect information for you, colonel."

"I am sorry to hear the young woman has fared so badly. Let us hope she will remain unharmed until I can get time to turn about and take steps to negotiate for her release. See me again before leaving Carlisle. I may wish you to carry a message for me."

Ballou returned to the street and found a curious group surrounding Black Beaver. No incivility had been offered the Conestoga as it was now known he came in company with one who had business with Bouquet. Interest quickly shifted to Ballou and he was plied with eager questions. His answers tended to pacify the townsmen in a degree, but he could not escape their interrogations until a newcomer up the street attracted their attention.

Like sheep the group ran to learn what the stranger had to relate. Ballou would have moved on if not for a sudden chorus of exultation—a most unusual sound in Carlisle at that time—arousing his curiosity. Bidding Black Beaver to take the horse into a field the forest-runner approached the circle of excited citizens. They were applauding a swarthy faced fellow who was wearing Indian leggings and carrying a long rifle.

"I was caught by the Shawnees when scouting for General Forbes' army," he cried. "I was held a prisoner and have just escaped from a hunting party, after killing four of the ——s."

And he dangled before the spectators four fresh scalps of coarse black hair.

One might have thought the frantic citizens never before had seen a man who had killed an Indian. Those close to him patted his shoulders and caressed his arms. Those on the outside of the circle danced and yelped. Ballou worked his way through the group and said:

"Mister, if you're fresh from the Indians I must have a word with you. My name is Jarvis Ballou. I have just come as an express to Colonel Bouquet. I brought him the first news of the fall of Venango, Le Boeuf, and Presqu' Isle."

When Ballou finished the man showed his teeth in a grin and seized his hand, and declared:

"I'm glad to meet some one that's not afraid of the Indians. We'll step aside from these people and pow-wow."

Ballou led the way to the field where Black Beaver was watching the horse graze. The man scowled heavily at the Conestoga and fiercely demanded—

"Who's that red man?"

Ballou explained and sat on the grass and took another inventory of the stranger. Already he had noted that while speaking good English the man yet spoke with a trace of an accent. Ballou produced his tobacco pouch and offered it, but the other refused it and used his own, a mixture of tobacco and willow bark.

"Learned to like kinnikinick while living a prisoner with the savages," he explained. "I'm Gregory Dunn, Maryland born, scout for Forbes. Taken a prisoner to the Scioto towns. Never had a chance to escape till the Indians believed they had washed all the white blood out of me. Got my chance with a hunting party, killed four in the night and brought in their scalps."

Again he displayed the four hanks of hair.

Ballou leaned forward and stared at the hair and remarked—

"One looks like a squaw's; one like a boy's."

Dunn scowled and replaced the scalps in his belt and growled:

"That boy won't ever become a man. As for the squaw, she was the daughter of the ——; worse to prisoners than any warrior. She'll never stick pine splinters in another white man and roast him to death by inches."

"Yet a woman and a boy," remonstrated Ballou.

"By the name! You talk high, mister. These people in the road wouldn't feel touchy if they knew I'd killed a squaw and her brat." Then he sighed. "But I'm forgetting myself. It sounds rough; but it was kill them all, or be caught. And what they do to a man who's been adopted and then breaks away isn't pleasant."

The last was very true; for no offense loomed more monstrous in the red man's estimation than the escape of an adopted prisoner. Hair from a woman or a child's head would always repel Ballou, but he wished to be fair to Dunn. Certainly there was none among the refugees who would criticize his killings.

Ballou announced:

"I am hoping you can help me. You are fresh from the Indians, and you may have heard something about a white girl, who was captured a few days ago near Bushy Run. Nell Marks by name."

"Was she tall and fair, with blue eyes and hair the color of new corn-silk?" eagerly asked Dunn.

"That would be Nell Marks," whispered Ballou, his heart seeming to cease beating as he realized he was talking to one who might have seen her in the Indians' power.

"I saw her, but not to speak to her. I was close to her, but dared not speak as it would make the savages suspicious of me, and I was about to try to escape. It wasn't in my power to help her any."

"I understand. Some of Colonel Smith's rangers followed the trail and think she was taken to the Muskingum, or to Pontiac's village."

"Then the rangers may have rescued her."

"No. They followed the trail but a short distance."

"Then she is at the Great Island village on the west branch of the Susquehanna. I heard the warriors say they were taking her there."

Ballou was both alarmed and relieved by this intelligence. It was good to know the girl was not being hurried to the camps of the blood-thirsty Ottawas, but it was terrible to think of her as a prisoner on Great Island. This village originally was a Delaware town, but now was a foul nest of a mixed band, fit company for the —— to head.

"I'm indebted to you, Dunn. There is nothing I wouldn't do to set the young woman free."

"It's a sad case," murmured Dunn. "And yet it might be worse. The Indians are learning that their prisoners, especially women, are of more value alive than dead. They will hold her to trade for some war-chief in English hands. It's very possible for a determined man or two to rescue her. There is much rum drinking at the village. A man might steal in and get the girl out while the savages are drunk. I would offer my services; but no more of the woods for me. For should I be caught——"

He paused and threw out his hands.

Ballou thanked him warmly for his information. As they rose to separate he remarked—

"There is something about you that makes me think that, like myself, you have French blood in your veins."

Dunn shook his head and said:

"No. I'm English of the English. I can't say there wasn't some French blood way back. But for several generations, no."

Ballou directed Black Beaver to remain with the horse. He parted with Dunn in the road and hastened to find Bouquet and announce his purpose of traveling to Great Island. This time he found Colonel Bouquet in a far from placid humor. He was pacing the length of the room, his face flushed and frowning:

"Here's a bad kettle of fish, Ballou," he greeted. "The settlers not only will not help me, but they're stopping me from getting help from friendly Indians."

Ballou, deeply puzzled, held his tongue and waited.

"I feed them. I marched out with a small force in an effort to save their property and lives," continued Bouquet. "I ask for volunteers and get practically none. Then they step in—some of them—and hinder me from securing the services of friendly Delawares. It's intolerable!"

"I don't yet just understand, colonel," said Ballou.

Bouquet ceased his pacing and threw himself into his chair and more composedly said:

"I talk like a foolish man. Tag ends of nothing. I'll explain: White men, or a man, stole into a camp of friendly Delawares, who were coming here to serve me as scouts, and murdered four of their number. The Indians were absent from the camp except the four. Killing the two men was evil enough, but to slay the woman and boy was dastardly. Needless to say that the men of that particular band of Delawares do not fancy leaving their women and children in one of our settlements while they go scouting for me. A woodsman brought me the news. He met the band after they had given up the chase of the murderers. The Indians insist one man did it. But that seems unreasonable."

Ballou's eyes opened wide as he heard this.

"A woman and a child's scalps," he mumbled. "Why! that's what Dunn had—Gregory Dunn. The Englishman who talks like a Frenchman. But that doesn't seem possible!"

"In ——'s grace, explain what you mean?" cried the exasperated commander.

Ballou described Dunn and the four scalps the fellow had been displaying to the townspeople and refugees.

"But his story sounded straight. He said he escaped from the Shawnees, a hunting party; that he had been their prisoner since the Forbes campaign. He even told of seeing Nell Marks. He said the Indians were taking her to the Great Island village. I came back to let you know I was traveling to the west branch of the Susquehanna instead of down the Ligonier road."

"Waste no more time!" cried Bouquet. "We'll find this fellow and question him. I'll turn out the guard and have him brought here. If he's guilty of this crime he'll soon find he's brought his hair to the wrong market."

He called in the sentry and ordered him to send in a sergeant. Then he directed Ballou:

"Go at once and see if you can find him. Place him under arrest and hold him for the guard, or fetch him here. By the Eternal! If he has done this foul act he shall pay the penalty."

BALLOU hurried into the road and began his search for Dunn, but failed to find any trace of him about the town. Thinking the fellow might have withdrawn to some of the surrounding fields he widened his circle and came to Black Beaver who was guarding the grazing horse near the road.

"I look for the man who was with me in this field. The one who smoked kinnikinick," he told the Conestoga.

Black Beaver continued staring at the blue silhouette of a mountain for nearly a minute, then remarked:

"He is bad flesh. He carried Leni-lenape hair in his belt. One scalp was a squaw's. One a boy's."

"Yes, yes! Did Black Beaver see the path he took after I left him?"

But there was no hurrying the red man into a flow of language. He resumed his study of the distant mountain; and Ballou bit his lips and waited. Finally the Indian answered:

"Black Beaver was afraid of him. His Ga-go-sa medicine whispered the man had killed friendly Leni-lenape. He is a son of Onontio. Not Ingelishman. His tongue is crooked. His heart is black. Black Beaver does not go where he is until his medicine lets him turn into a snake very quick."

Fighting down his impatience Ballou lighted his pipe and passed it to the Conestgoa and remained silent until the Indian had taken several puffs and had returned the pipe. After blowing the smoke to the four wind-gods Ballou inquired—

"Can my friend's medicine tell him what the Frenchman is called among the Indians?"

Because of the ceremony, or because of the flattering reference to the medicine of the wooden mask, the Conestoga was more prompt in replying—

"Among the Leni-lenape, his friends, he is called The Trade Knife."

Ballou, much startled, lowered his pipe and stared at the Indian.

"Trade Knife! And to think I had him within reach, the —— renegade!"

This in English. In the Delaware tongue he demanded—

"Why did not my brother tell me when we were here smoking and talking?"

"The Trade Knife is very bad flesh. He kills. He is more cruel than the Leni-lenape, his friends. My medicine whispers some time I shall find him alone in the woods. Then Ga-go-sa will help me kill him."

Ballou waited to hear no more but started on the run to find Colonel Bouquet and inform him of the man's identity. The Trade Knife figured in many border stories of cruelty. There were some who scoffed at the existence of such a person as the renegade was described to be; but not many. Those border men who had traveled much through the Indian country had caught glimpses of him in various red towns. He was always on his good behavior when traders came upon him, but it was the common belief that he had ceased to be white and in turning red had absorbed only the more cruel traits of his adopted people.

Ballou had never seen him, nor had he ever heard of his visiting a settlement unless it be to lead a raid against it. With the breaking out of Pontiac's war many stories of the man's fiendish acts had been told along the frontier, but Ballou had not accepted all of these as being facts. The man was evil enough, however, and had evidenced his degenerate qualities of mind before his wickedness had forced him to seek refuge with the Indians. Although of French extraction he had confined his evil activities to western Pennsylvania.

Ballou passed the guard as it searched the town and without any delay was shown into Colonel Bouquet's presence. He briefly reported what he had learned from the Indian.

"My men are searching," said the colonel. "But if you have failed to locate the fellow I fear he has taken alarm and fled. He's a rare rascal and I should like to catch him. The sergeant tried to interest some of the settlers in the search, but they seemed to think that any red scalp is better than none. I have borne very patiently the ill usage of this province and still have a hope they will do something for me. But if they won't help me fight they might at least help catch the scoundrel who hinders me."

"I am leaving tonight for Great Island village to look for Mistress Marks. If I meet Trade Knife in my travels one of us will count a coup. If my medicine is strong I shall be back in time to serve you as scout or guide," said Ballou.

Bouquet extended his hand and kindly said:

"I wish you success. But you may not return. I may not return. May God send peace to His Majesty's colonies."

Ballou secured the trader's horse and left it in care of a blacksmith, and then searched diligently to find an animal to take its place. But Bouquet's need of horses and wagons had swept the country clean. Tiring of the noisy street the forest-runner took his blankets and with Black Beaver at his heels withdrew to a field. The Conestoga was silent while they ate their journey-cake and meat. Ballou had no desire to talk for he was trying to reconcile the renegade's statement concerning the girl's presence at the Great Island village with his subsequent discovery of the fellow's identity. Being Trade Knife why should any one believe his story? He turned his doubts over and over as he munched his bread and finally decided that Trade Knife had seen the girl.

There would be no point in the fellow's saying as much when he could have denied it. Ballou finished his last piece of bread and reached a second conclusion; having seen the girl he had learned her destination and had spoken truthfully in saying she was being taken to the Indian village on the west branch of the Susquehanna. Had Trade Knife lied Ballou's trip would not be entirely wasted as he would be on the northern route to the ruins of Venango, whence he could travel down to the Muskingum villages, or north to Pontiac's war-camps around Detroit.

"Black Beaver's medicine tells him his white brother will soon travel a water path," spoke up Black Beaver.

"His medicine has eyes that see the Susquehanna. Does it see a white girl in the Indian village at the upper end of Great Island?" curiously asked Ballou.

The Conestoga held the wooden mask, wrapped in a blanket, beside his head, and after a bit replied:

"It sees no white woman there. It sees death flying among the trees."

Ballou turned his head to conceal a grim smile. The Conestoga had small heart for venturing among the turbulent warriors on the west branch. Black Beaver remained silent for a few minutes and then added:

"The Ga-go-sa whisper that a white woman stands at the end of a long trail. The trail is so long the False-faces can not see the end clearly, but they say it begins on the Susquehanna at Harris' Ferry."

Ballou jerked his head about and stared at his dusky companion, and inquired—

"Does it see the Conestoga following that trail with the white man?"

"It sees him," the Indian unhesitatingly replied. "It sees him turning himself into a green snake and taking scalps. But there is death there, flying among the trees."

"Who will be killed?"

"Mingo, Shawnee, or Leni-Lenape. Who knows who else?"

Ballou brooded thoughtfully. He had misjudged the Indian. Black Beaver was ready to accompany him—which was very good. But would Nell Marks be found awaiting rescue at the end of long wanderings? Would luck, or his medicine, stand by him and aid him to find one young woman hidden somewhere in a forested continent?

"We will start afoot for Harris' Ferry in the morning. Tonight we rest," he remarked.

"There will be a horse," muttered the Indian. They smoked in silence for a while and then spread their blankets and slept sound until morning.

NOW fate had worked some queer pranks on Ballou, but none that had given him more pleasure than his encounter with Enoch Meekly and Hance Whit when he and the Indian returned to the town. The two men had just arrived and were mounted. When Ballou discovered them he beheld them angrily refusing the order of a red-coated sergeant to dismount and consider themselves under arrest.

"Keep back, or I'll brain you," hoarsely warned Whit, who carried his right arm in a sling and was brandishing an ax in his left hand.

"What's gnawing at you fellers?" expostulated Meekly. "Mistook us for Injuns?

"We believe one of you is an Injun-killer," said the sergeant.

"One? Both of us has killed more Injuns then you have fingers and toes," snarled Whit. "If you folks want a fresh Injun go out in the woods and git one. There's enough to go 'round."

"One of you is said to have killed four friendly Delawares," persisted the sergeant, keeping his musket half raised.

"I'll do some one a mortal hurt if you folks don't fall back. Some of you know me, Hance Whit. The Injuns have stole Steve Marks' girl and I don't favor any of 'em, but I've never hurt a friendly one. Hands off! Or by —— white blood will run."

Ballou reached Meekly's horse and tugged at the forest-runner's sleeve. Meekly quickly glanced down, then grinned broadly. Whit also saw him and jerked his head in a sullen nod but never removed his gaze from the face of the determined sergeant, who was now reenforced by a file of soldiers.

"These men are honest settlers. I saw and talked with the man who killed the Delawares. Neither of these is that fellow," cried Ballou.

"Aye. That's right. These men be old Meekly and Hance Whit. They ain't been in town afore for a dog's age," spoke up a citizen.

The sergeant recognized Ballou as the man who had been closeted with Colonel Bouquet. He slowly lowered his musket and ordered his men to the right about.

"No harm done, mister. We had orders to gather up all strangers. You speak for them and that makes them all right."

Ballou and Black Beaver walked ahead of the two horsemen to a place where the men could procure some food; then escorted them to the field and waited for them to break their fast.

"Now, Enoch, tell me what's happened?" impatiently demanded Ballou as his friend finished the last bit of bread and meat.

It was Whit who answered. He swore fierce oaths and then said:

"The rangers turned back, —— their cowardly hides! Meekly and me went on a few miles and I got shot in the arm——"

"The trail was leading northerly," broke in Meekly."

"They were taking her to the Great Island village," Ballou excitedly informed him. And he hurriedly told what Trade Knife, the French renegade, had told him.

"That makes it hard!" groaned Whit, scowling at his wounded arm. "Oh, to be whole and come to grips with that skunk."

"You've got to stick here and mend that hole," said Meekly. "Ballou must have your hoss to ride to Harris' Ferry."

Whit groaned again. Then with his face a mask of ferocity he turned to Ballou and cried:

"You listen to me! This cursed arm of mine makes me slim help. You've got to find Nell Marks. I don't believe she's at Great Island village, but that —— hole must be looked into. So you must go and Meekly must go. But, listen, Ballou; the man who marries Nell Marks must kill me first. I swear it on my ax."

Ballou glared at him wrathfully and said—

"If she'll have me I'll fight you; kill you if need be, when your arm gets well."

"You both talk like fools!" angrily upbraided Meekly. "A poor gal in Injun hands and you two querreling over who's to marry her!"

Ballou flushed.

"The Conestoga's medicine says there's death around the Great Island village. Perhaps I shall not return. That'll make it simpler."

"I don't want no chance to crow over a dead man," cried Whit. "I'll hold it ag'in you if you git killed. You won't find the girl on Great Island."

"I allow we will," said Meekly. "But if she ain't there we'll keep on to the Alleghany and search to the north and down the Ohio. What about this Injun?"

Black Beaver understood, and spoke up:

"The snake medicine goes with you. It knows the paths and villages. If a white girl is there the medicine can find her. The False-faces will help."

"You can have my hoss, Ballou," said Whit. "We found the two straying in the woods."

Ballou was telling them of Black Beaver's medicine and its promise of a horse for him to ride when a sergeant of the Royal Americans, and six soldiers entered the field, and the sergeant crisply announced:

"Colonel Bouquet needs these two animals. Come to headquarters and get an order for their value."

Whit was for resisting, but Bouquet's need was great and it was not a long journey to Harris' Ferry. Ballou prevented any unpleasantness by saying:

"They are strays. My friends found them. We can't take pay for them."

Meekly declared he must have a few hours sleep before he could set out afoot. Ballou was impatient to be off at once but appreciated his old friend's need of rest. Meekly soon was sleeping soundly. Whit remained awake, his face very wobegone of expression.

"Remember what I said about a fight?" he muttered to Ballou. "I didn't mean no rough 'n tumble fight, but a real one."

"You shall have your way," growled Ballou. "But it'll be a poor way to win the favor of Mistress Marks."

Whit's heavy features twisted as if from physical pain, and his rough voice was shaky as he replied:

"I couldn't ever give her up, Ballou. It's like a knife through my heart to send you, of all men, after her. I know how it'll count in your favor if you're the one to fetch her back. I'd rather send any one else if it was possible. But you know the woods best, next to Meekly. But just keep in mind that she's the only thing I ever wanted, and that I can't give her up."

He got to his feet and walked disconsolately back to the town.

Black Beaver, who was sitting at some distance, asked Ballou why the white man had a black heart toward his white brother. The Conestoga was red and did not count, and Ballou found himself explaining—

"Two cabins want the same squaw."

"My brother is a wise man and a blind man," said Black Beaver.

"Black Beaver's medicine was blind when it told us we should have a horse," countered Ballou.

"There were two horses. A word whispered in the ear of the white chief would send the white men to the Susquehanna on four legs instead of two. The Beaver's medicine was strong."

"And death flies among the trees on the upper end of Great Island," said Ballou with a faint smile.

"At Great Island and all along the long trail. But something almost as bad as death for my white brother," was the enigmatical response.

Ballou scowled heavily at the blanket wrapped around the grotesque wooden mask.

CHAPTER IV

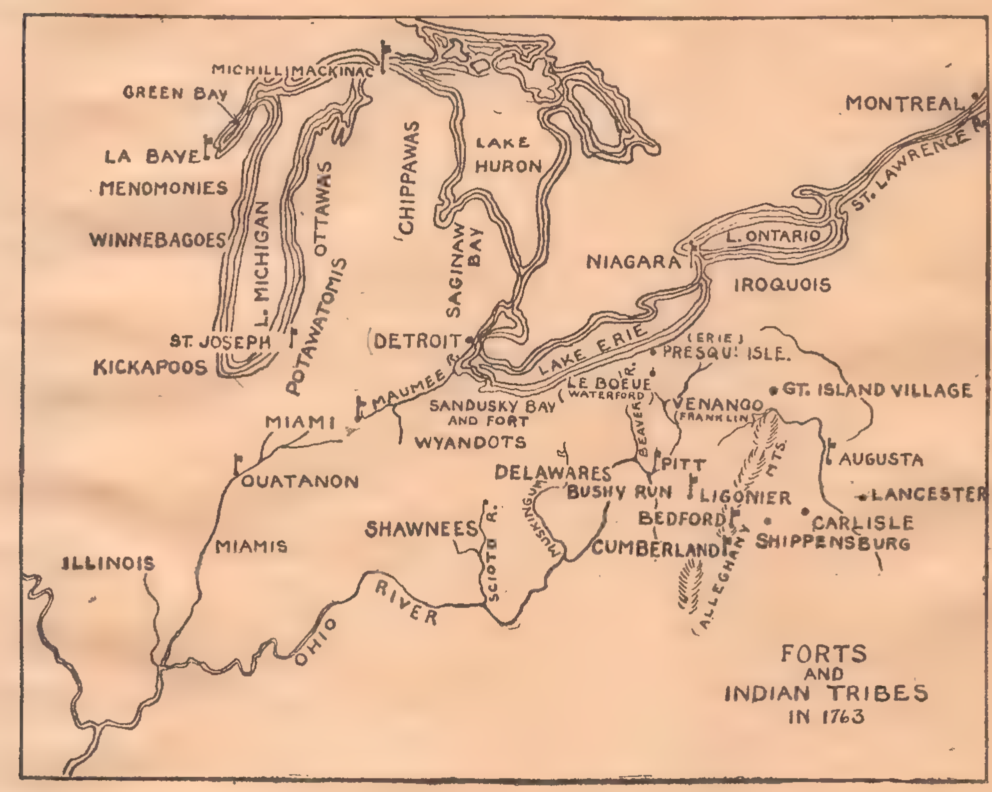
THE WAMPUM TRAP

IT WAS nightfall when the travelers paddled their canoe by Fort Augusta on the east bank of the Susquehanna just below the junction of the north and west branches. Having their own particular business in mind they refrained from landing at the fort, and selected a small island between the forks as their camping-place. On this island, as well as on each side of the river, were the reminders of the ancient village of Shamokin, a town of great importance long before the coming of the white men; for from times immemorial it had controlled the approaches from the Potomac, the Delaware, and the Ohio.

It was here that the warriors of the Long House halted when returning from raids against the Catawba and the Cherokee and rested after their long journey up the Great Warriors' Path. Until the huts were burned in 1756 by French Indians the town was the point of departure for traders taking the northern route to Venango, Kitanning, or the far Ohio country. Up to the beginning of the Braddock war it was the center of Iroquois influence in Pennsylvania, whence radiated the commands of the Long House to the subjected Delawares.

Several missionaries had labored at Shamokin, and one and all had lamented the dissolute habits and violence of its mixed population.

Now its glory had departed and the white man's fort guarded the waterways and land paths diverging from it. Meekly and Ballou saw nothing but bush-covered ruins as they sat by their fire and ate their supper. Black Beaver, the Conestoga, wandered from the firelight and felt he was accompanied by ghosts. It was the spot where men of the Long House, oppressors of his people, had held their revelries and had celebrated their victories over the southern tribes. Many a captive had been tortured here as a pleasing preface to the victors' return to Onondaga, and the Seneca villages in the Genesee country.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LA BAYE
MENOMONIES
WINNEBAGOES
L. MICHIGAN
OTTAWAS
CHIPPAWAS
LAKE HURON
SAGINAW BAY
MONTREAL
ST. LAWRENCE R.
L. ONTARIO
NIAGARA
IROQUOIS
POTAWATOMIS
ST. JOSEPH
KICKAPOOS
DETROIT
LAKE ERIE
(ERIE)
PRESQU' ISLE.
MAUMEE R.
SANDUSKY BAY AND FORT
LE BOEUF (WATERFORD)
VENANGO (FRANKLIN)
GT. ISLAND VILLAGE
MIAMI
WYANDOTS
BEAVER R.
AUGUSTA
DELAWARES
PITT
BUSHY RUN
LIGONIER
LANCESTER
QUATANON
MUSKINGUM
BEDFORD
CARLISLE
SHAWNEES
SCIOTO R.
CUMBERLAND
SHIPPENSBURG
MIAMIS
ILLINOIS
ALLEGHANY MTS
OHIO RIVER
FORTS AND INDIAN TRIBES IN 1763

The last of the Conestogas, prowling about what to him was historic ground but only virgin land to his white friends, heard the whisperings of conquered and conqueror in the night breeze. With head bowed low, like one who broods over the beginnings of cities, he returned to the fire and muffled himself in his blanket, hugged the wooden mask to his breast, and continued his somber reverie.

"If we don't find her at Great Island we must push through to the Alleghany," muttered Ballou as he tossed from hand to hand a gouge that had been fashioned in the Stone Age.

Meekly idly pricked a leaf-shaped arrow head into the forest mold and murmured, "Forty mile portage. During a good fresh I've come down here from the Alleghany inside of seven days. Hope we find the Injuns good and drunk."

Ballou discarded the gouge and picked up another bit of aboriginal workmanship from the rubbish heap beside the fire and examined it idly, never once thinking that it might be as old as the first Neolithic man, and mumbled:

"Aye. If they're deep in liquor it'll help. But if just mad drunk the girl better— If Trade Knife——"

His voice became a meaningless murmur.

"Looks to me like the Knife was hoping we'd come up here so he can nab us," declared Meekly. "Hope Tamaque won't be with 'em. He's a hard one to fool."

"There's death on the land and in the water ahead of us," announced the muffled voice of Black Beaver from under the blanket. "False-faces are whispering there is much danger in our path. Can my white brothers hear the singing of the warriors as they dance around the fire-tree? Can they see strong men twisting and biting their teeth together as the flames eat into them? There are too many ghosts here for sleep."

This talk depressed Ballou, for it increased his fears concerning the Marks girl's peril. Meekly yawned sleepily and threw away the ancient arrow-head and remarked:

"No ghosts can keep me awake when I want to snatch a few winks. So long as they don't touch my pipe'n tobaccer they can talk their heads off."

With this bit of philosophical defiance he spread his blanket and was soon asleep. Ballou quickly followed his example. Black Beaver sat motionless for another hour before succumbing. Because of their proximity to the fort they did not fear a surprize attack and slept unguarded.

They were ready for travel before sunrise. With the return of daylight the ghosts ceased troubling the Conestoga and he was eager to press on and win honor. As they rolled their blankets and looked to their primings he boasted:

"It is good to die. Black Beaver is the last of his people. Why should he run from death? Let them kill the last of the Conestogas, but let the Conestogas take many of the enemy along with them to show to our ghost fathers, so they will know we died like brave men and not like old men sitting helpless on their mats. Black Beaver's medicine tells him he shall die like a very brave man."

He was quite uplifted by this thought, and then became downcast when they went to their canoe and observed that which the darkness had concealed on their arrival. The discovery caused no apprehension to the white men. It consisted of two poles painted red and stuck in the ground, such as the red men used in making captives secure for the night. But the poles were old and weather-worn and the paint had faded.

They interested the forest-runners no more than did the old arrow-heads and gouges. Had the paint been fresh and the sap not yet dried the white men would have felt apprehensive while their companion would have pressed on eagerly to prove his valor. But to the red mind old things were ever reminders of ghosts, and Black Beaver's eyes lost much of their glitter as he took his place in the canoe.

They had the river to themselves and traveled until near sunset. They halted at the point where the river commenced bending to the west, and where the path to Wyoming branched off to the east. They consulted briefly and decided to conceal the canoe and make the rest of the distance afoot, keeping to the north bank of the river until opposite the Great Island village, which was opposite to the mouth of Bald Eagle creek.

After hiding the canoe, and withdrawing from the river so the light of their fire might not be seen from the water, they hastily prepared food and turned in. They had slept but a few hours when the Conestoga aroused them by leaving his blanket and stealing toward the river. Ballou sped after him and impatiently demanded—

"Why does the Beaver walk alone?"

"His eyes are blind but his medicine hears a new voice, the voice of a ghost," the Conestoga uneasily answered.

"You heard a wolf howl, or a fox bark, or an owl calling."

"What the —— is the matter?" softly called out Meekly. "That cuss gone ghost-hunting again? We'd better send him down the river and go on alone."

"It was the voice of a ghost hunting for something to eat," informed Black Beaver with a little shudder.

"Come back to your blanket. We must be strong tomorrow," coaxed Ballou.

Somewhere off in the woods a weird cry sounded; and it was neither the cry of wolf, fox, nor owl, nor of any other night animal that the white men had ever heard.

"Gawdfrey! What is it?" whispered Meekly, squirming from his blanket and picking up his long rifle.

Ballou was nonplused. He could only hazard as a guess—

"Indians."

But neither he, nor his companions, believed this.

After a few minutes of strained listening the cry sounded again, this time louder and more distinct. It climbed the scale and ended in a falsetto screech; and yet it was not the scream of the *loup-cervier*.

There was a human quality in the voice, and a timbre in the crescendo that suggested a woman in mortal fear.

Despite their long acquaintance with the forest the white men were unable to classify the cry. And what a woodsman could not interpret was something to be investigated and solved would one retain his peace of mind. Black Beaver unreservedly accepted the strange call as emanating from a ghost hungry for human victims. He pulled his blanket over his head and muttered:

"O Ga-go-sa! Bringer of sickness! Eater of men! Look! I am of the False-face band. Be not angry with me."

"Ghost or devil, it's got to show he's proof against my rifle!" growled Ballou.

Picking up his piece he darted into the black timber and began feeling his way toward the direction of the voice. There was small reason in this maneuver, for the night under the tall trees was pitch-black, unless Ballou needed action to restore his spirits. As he stealthily pressed on he heard the voice several times, once quite close, but neither saw, nor heard anything to shoot at. At last realizing the uselessness of his quest he retraced his way to the fire and found the flames leaping high.

Meekly had taken to the woods and it was the Conestoga who had piled on the fuel.

"Kick that blaze to pieces!" Ballou wrathfully cried.

Black Beaver made a moaning sound and did not move. Ballou started to execute his own command, but before he could scatter the burning brands the terrible scream sounded so close at hand as to cause him to jump nervously. The blanket had fallen from the Conestoga's head, and with a gasp the Indian was staring fixedly at some sumac bushes. Ballou switched his gaze in that direction and glimpesd a visage that left him unable to move for a few moments.

It was a long, pallid, distorted face, with black hair hanging on each side. It resembled the wooden mask under the Conestoga's blanket more than it did a human countenance. The features seemed to be set in one strained pattern, the mouth half open, the eyes deep set and appearing to stare without seeing the fire, or the two men. From the gaping mouth came the beginning of the unnatural call, guttural at first but quickly rising to the highest register.

The Conestoga as a last defense pulled out the wooden mask and clapped it over his face. With a piercing shriek the strange creature vanished behind the sumac growth. Ballou nervously fired his rifle. The voice was heard at intervals until very far away.

"What is it?" cried Meekly, breaking from cover on the river-side of the camp.

"—— knows," mumbled Ballou as he reloaded his rifle. "It looked like the devil. It wasn't red nor white."

"Ga-go-sa!" cried Black Beaver, now alert and holding his head high. "He saw I had the False-face medicine. He ran away without eating us. My white brothers can sleep again."

And strangely enough it was the Indian who displayed fortitude and the white men who remained uneasy and bewildered.

"Beats ——, anyway," muttered Meekly as he wiped the sweat from his forehead and dropped on his blanket by the fire. "Wish you'd got a clean shot at it. Then we'd know if it was bullet proof."

"I was upset. I fired before I knew it. I don't remember taking any aim. I sha'n't feel right till I know what it was."

"What did it look like?" asked Meekly.

"I don't know. I'll swear no human face ever looked that way. I only saw the face. Looked the most like the Indian's mask, mebbe. I don't know. But give me another chance to draw a bead on it and I'll soon know if it's ghost or not."

THERE was no further appearance of the ghastly visage, no more disturbing cries; yet the white men slept but poorly and were aroused by the ordinary night sounds that they had learned to ignore. With the first light of day they were up and eager to get away from the spot. On the south side of the river the broken country extended well down to the bank, but on the north side the river bottom was extensive and comprised level tracts of woods which permitted rapid traveling.

They soon struck into an old Indian path leading to the west, and the Conestoga took the lead to warn against danger. They talked none of the strange visitant, but the mind of each was busy with much the same kind of thoughts. Black Beaver was less perturbed in his conjectures, for he had solved the mystery to his own satisfaction. He had looked on the dread face of one of the Ga-go-sa and yet lived. His heart was high as he told himself that the three of them would have been devoured if not for the wooden mask establishing his claim on the good will of the terrible gods.

After a few hours the Conestoga came to a fresh trail cutting the path from the north. He waited for his companions to come up, and after pointing to the signs, swung out into the pathless forest. After a dozen miles of this, more difficult, traveling the Indian turned back to the trail. They entered it at a point where the band from the north had halted to eat. From the quantity of bark spoons left by the ashes of several fires it was plain the band was a large one.

A short distance beyond the camping place they came to the scene of a border tragedy. Two red poles stuck in the ground, a tree trimmed of its branches to the height of ten feet, a white man dead inside a circle of brush.

Meekly softly exclaimed:

"Here's more tricks! Got ready to burn him, then didn't. See they painted him black, then used a ax. What in sin made 'em quit?"

"Poor devil!" muttered Ballou. "Yet he was lucky." He examined the bushes and found a piece of red cloth torn from a uniform. "He must 'a' been one of the Fort Augusta soldiers. Caught while out on a scout."

Meekly nodded, and added:

"The band come from the north. Must 'a' been Senecas bound for the Alleghany. A man never oughter go scouting in a red coat. Something skeered 'em off."

"Ga-go-sa," hissed Black Beaver. Then, much puzzled, he asked: "But, if the False-faces, why didn't they eat the white man?"

The trail was nearly twenty-four hours old. From the numerous signs it was evident the savages had quit their diabolical sport because of fear and had traveled some distance on the run. Having scant fear of being discovered by any scouts the three men stuck to the path until they were within a few miles of the lower end of Great Island. Here the new trail swung to the northwest, avoiding the island. Meekly amended his former statement by saying—

"They're bound for Pontiac's village 'stead of for the lower Alleghany."

That night they made their camp some distance back from the river and nearly opposite the head of the island. They slept until midnight and then arose to make a preliminary reconnaissance. This was the ancient home of the Conestoga's people. The Eries, too, had occupied the island site when the town was known as Utchowig. Then came the Delawares, after the Cat people had been driven south by the Five Nations. From time out of mind various tribal waves had reached the island and had bided for a while.

Ballou was the first to reach the bank directly opposite the Indian town. The village was quiet. A dull glow at intervals told where the fires were burning. Ballou pulled off his shirt and whispered to Meekly:

"Wait for me here. Keep my rifle. Keep Black Beaver back. I'm going to scout a bit."

Meekly offered no objection. It was a part of their risk. One of the three must go and Ballou was a better man in the water. Neither had full confidence in the Conestoga because of his superstitious fancies. Meekly took the rifle and their hands met for a brief grasp. Without a splash Ballou entered the water and commenced wading noiselessly. He was not forced to swim until nearly in midstream, and then only for a short distance. He would have preferred to swim from bank to bank. In his belt he carried his knife and ax. When within a few rods from the bank he squatted in the shallow water and waited for some minutes to be sure no sentinel was waiting for him to come up the bank. There were no dogs in the village and he considered his risks greatly reduced. Foot by foot he moved inshore until his fingers found the exposed root of a tree. Inch by inch he began moving up the short declivity.

A low grunt on the opposite side of the tree startled him. He could hear a man stirring about. Half erect Ballou drew his ax and waited. A moccasin came to a rest within a few inches of his face, and he knew a sleepy sentry was just above him and staring out on the inky tide of the river. There was nothing to see in the river except the reflection of stars; and it was obvious the Indian had been sleeping and had not scented danger. Ballou's hand itched to seize the moccasined foot and yank the warrior into the stream, but he knew that before this maneuver could be executed the man would sound an alarm.

Muttering something inaudible the Indian suddenly dropped in a sitting posture. Gritting his teeth in his efforts to remain motionless Ballou, half bowed, waited. The *lap-lap* of the river's drowsy song began to exert its influence over the sentinel. Gradually his breathing grew deep and long. And a soft *thump* told when his hand slipped from his knee and dropped some weapon to the ground. Very slowly Ballou raised his head and lifted his ax. Very slowly he straightened his aching back. Before him was the sentinel, only the darkness concealed his bowed form. With ax ready Ballou gingerly extended his left hand until the tips of his fingers lightly touched a scalplock.

The Indian started to throw back his head just as the flat of the ax knocked him senseless.

The limp form slipped forward and downward like a bag of meal into Ballou's arms. The man was short and stout and the inert figure was difficult to manage without sounding an alarm. Backing down the slope carefully Ballou half carried, half dragged his victim. Once in the water his task was easier. He waded to midstream, hauling the sentinel after him, and getting beyond his depths he struck out for the opposite shore, his left hand grasping the scalplock. He towed his victim to shallow water and then dragged him close to the bank. He made a bit of a noise and Meekly whispered—

"What you got?"

"Get down here and make sure of him," hissed Ballou. "Man on watch. Asleep, or half drunk. We must get his body out of sight."

Meekly slipped into the warm water and after a brief examination announced:

"Dead as Gineral Braddock. Must 'a' drownded him coming over. Can't find any hurt on him."

"Flat of the ax so's not to leave any signs. Hush!"

But the newcomer was Black Beaver, who grunted softly on learning that his white brother had already counted coup. The Conestoga was at once seized with an inordinate lust to emulate Ballou's success. He entered the river and Ballou called on him to help conceal the body.

"Downstream the flight of an ax are rocks and brush. Put him there. The Black Beaver takes his medicine to water."

With that he commenced wading away from them.

"The danged fool will try some of his funny works and fetch the whole tribe down on us," growled Meekly.

But as the Conestoga was now lost in the darkness the two could do no better than to hunt for the rocks and brush and hide the dead.

Black Beaver carried only his ax for a weapon. Under one arm he had the wooden mask. Instead of proceeding straight across he quartered the stream so as to strike the tip of the island and a short distance above the village. As he advanced a light sprang up among the fires and moved rapidly along the bank. Something had alarmed one of the other sentinels, perhaps the discovery that the man on the north shore of the island was missing from his post. He had kindled a torch and was proceeding to investigate. Soon guttural voices calling to each other reached the Indian in the river and the white men busy at their gruesome task.

"I'm going after the Indian. He'll run into a trap," whispered Ballou.

Leaving his friend to finish concealing the savage he waded out into the darkness. By sitting down and scanning the surface of the water in the direction of a replenished fire he could make out an object. He advanced and found himself standing beside the Beaver, who had halted with the water up to his arm-pits.

THE voices on the island were raised, and the Beaver whispered:

"They shout the name of the Loon. The man you dragged into the river. They find where he fell into the water, but the water is not deep and they say some magic was at work, for they can not find his body. There is no current to wash him away. They say he was a very heavy man."

"Very heavy, like our white brother," murmured Ballou.

"Let my brother go back. The Beaver swims as swift as he walks." With that he resumed his wading, still aiming for a point a bit above the camp.

Several torches were now bobbing up and down the bank and many voices were seeking information, or declaring that magic was at work. Ballou did not return to the north shore at once, but tarried to watch the lights and catch fragments of the savages' talk. The most of them were Delawares with a few Shawnees and Mingoes, as the detached band of Iroquois residing on the Ohio were called.

The disappearance of the sentry was causing much alarm. Several Indians entered the water and extended in a line toward the middle of the river, each holding a torch low to search the bottom for signs.

If not for the unmistakable signs of his descent into the shallow water it would have been assumed that he had deserted his post and had retired into the timber to sleep.

Black Beaver realized the disquieting effect of the mystery on the half-drunken Indians and felt a greater reliance than ever upon the medicine of his wooden mask. The bulk of the savages were now clustered above the short line of torches now being duplicated in wavy blotches by the gentle current. Black Beaver reached a point some fifty yards above the outermost torch-holder and then permitted the current to float him downstream, the wooden mask over his face.

The man farthest from the bank began calling that the water was too deep and black for the light of his torch to penetrate. As he straightened to return to the excited group on the shore he held his torch high to illuminate his path. His gaze happened to swing upstream and his startled exclamation attracted general attention. Several called out to know what he had seen.

He remained motionless and speechless, his eyes staring at the strange object now entering the new arc of light. Then those on the bank glimpsed it and yelled a warning. The other men in the water scrambled madly for dry ground, but the outermost man seemed to be held by a spell. His mouth opened, but he made no outcry as the distorted face and its wreath of lank black hair floated nearer.

"Ga-go-sa!" hoarsely screamed a Mingo, whose father had worshiped the False-faces when living in the Long House.

With a howl of terror the man with the torch suddenly showed signs of life and turned to wade ashore. Those on the bank beheld the evil visage sweep in toward the terrified man. There came a swirl that was not made by the current, and the man screamed loudly and disappeared under water, the hand holding the torch vanishing last and briefly illuminating his going. With the torch extinguished the river once more became a floor of ebony, speckled with star dust. A shout of fear greeted the tragedy.

"The Ga-go-sa dragged Tall Tree under water!" howled a Mingo.

"The False-faces are very hungry and very angry. They have taken the Loon and Tall Tree!" amended another.

Ballou, a spell-bound spectator, turned back and began wading across and down the stream to where he had left Meekly. A soft *hiss* halted his cautious steps. A figure rose within a few feet of him and it had something in tow.

"Black Beaver's medicine is very strong," whispered the exultant Conestoga. "This man I bring made no fight. He died like a rabbit. The village will not sleep until the sun comes."

After the second savage was interred with the one slain by Ballou the Conestoga was desirous of returning and trying his luck again, but Meekly objected, saying:

"Their hearts are soft and weak just now, red brother, but if they found it was the Beaver and not magic that killed their men they would be very brave. We will go back in the woods and sleep. No Indian on the island will dare cross the river this night."

Reluctantly the Conestoga accompanied them back to their camp. While his companions slept he made a fire so that there might be live-coals for cooking the morning's game. Then he made a hoop from a sapling branch and painted it red and stretched Tall Tree's scalp upon it and hung it on a bush to dry.

With the first light of dawn Ballou scouted to the river and from the thick bushes studied the opposite bank. Smoke from a dozen fires was streaming up to stain the morning sky. Several groups of Indians were standing along the bank and staring at the river.

Suddenly there was a commotion at the tip of the island and a mystery-man, a worker of magic, pushed off in a canoe and floated downstream. At the commencement of the voyage he chanted loudly and shook a rattle made of the entire shell of the tortoise. But as the current caught the graceful craft and deflected it toward midstream he appeared to be doubting his wizard powers; for he dropped the rattle and ceased his chanting, and bent all his energies to paddling the canoe inshore.

It was plain to Ballou that this charm placed on the river did not satisfy the savages, for none ventured to wade in the shallow water. One warrior who slipped and started to slide down the bank sounded a loud cry and madly scrambled back beside his companions. This alarm quickly brought others of the band running to the bank to learn what new victim had been carried off.

Ballou was greatly excited to behold among the newcomers a white man. Only a woodsman's trained eye at that distance could have picked out the white man from the savages, for he was attired and painted like a warrior. Ballou gripped his rifle more tightly when he decided the fellow was no other than the Trade Knife, the French renegade.

The Knife put a question in a loud voice and a warrior answered. Ballou could catch the gist of their speech by the warrior's vivid pantomime in pointing to the placid current. Trade Knife strode to the edge of the bank and then leaped in. The Indians drew back, but as nothing happened to the reckless one they surged forward again. Wading ashore Trade Knife harangued them to some length and then returned to the village. All but two savages trailed after him.

Ballou rejoined his companions and informed them:

"The Trade Knife is over there. The Indians are well scared, but the Knife is trying to boost up their courage. I couldn't see what's going on in the village. I shall go downstream and cross and scout up through the woods."

"Wait till dark," advised Meekly, speaking in the Leni-lenape so the Indian might follow their talk.

"But if the girl is there——"

"It will be best for her if you wait till night. Let them see a white man other than the Knife and they'll believe a rescue party's behind him. Then they will make off with the girl, or kill her if they think they're being hard pressed. If we can sneak up close tonight we stand a chance of getting her free."

"Black Beaver will swim across and turn into a snake and wriggle close to the village. The False-faces will help him," spoke up the Conestoga.

"No use calling him a liar," growled Meekly. "But night's the time to go looking for the gal. Let's eat before them skunks git up courage enough to cross over to this side. I've a little medicine of my own I may hanker to try once it gits dark."

The Conestoga took his bow and arrows to an oak grove and soon returned with some squirrels. The ashes were raked from the coals and the game was broiled. After eating Ballou returned to the river to keep watch while the Conestoga renewed his face paint. Meekly disappeared on some mysterious errand. It was well for the three of them that Ballou was in the camp when Meekly returned, for so startling was his appearance the Conestoga would have howled in terror and fled. Ballou's strong nerves winced for a moment, then he understood and managed to restrain the Indian until he could make him realize the shocking masquerade concealed a friend and was not a supernatural being. Meekly had appropriated the scanty finery of one of the dead braves, the Loon, and had painted himself after the pattern affected by the dead man. The border of bear-fat encircling his face was daubed with spots of red and white. These two colors alternated in the bands drawn across his face from ear to ear. What gave him an unearthly appearance was his bald head covered with red paint. He looked like one freshly scalped.

"At first I took you for the dead man, or the devil," muttered Ballou.

"Sometimes it's a blessing to be bald-headed," said Meekly. "At night I'll look better. I found some touchwood, and after I've rubbed on that I'll sort of throw off a dull light in the dark. I'll be a vastly rare devil to those devils yon. They'll take me for the ghost of the short, stout-built cuss. Just before I show myself to them I'll take a dip in the river so's I'll drip water. Wish 'twas dark now!"

"The False-faces whispered to him and told him to do this," muttered Black Beaver, who could not overcome a tendency to shudder every time Meekly drew near him.

Ballou, too, was wishing for night, as the strain of uncertainty was telling on him. His ragged nerves demanded action. He felt he must be doing something to kill the time until he could cross to the island and scout the village and learn if the Marks girl was there. He abruptly announced:

"Enoch, you and Black Beaver stay here while I look about a bit. I'm all fidgety. Feel I must be moving. The Indians are too scared to cross the river. I'll be careful. If it wa'n't for that —— renegade we could go over there before night."

Meekly was afraid his friend would be over-bold and objected to his making a scout alone. He insisted the Conestoga go along. Ballou opposed this, and repeated his promise that he would run no risks. He ended the argument by taking his rifle and entering the growth north of the camp. Meekly felt relieved to see him moving farther away from the river. Ballou had no definite purpose. He simply wished to still the unrest in his heart.

When a short distance from the camp he scouted to the west for a mile without once sighting the river. He found no signs of Indians, nor had he expected to. He turned back with his uneasiness not a bit abated. For the first time he wondered if he had not been fooling himself, if there was not in the back of his mind a resolve to settle all doubts before night came. He recalled his promise to Meekly and feebly endeavored to oust the thought; but there persisted the grim purpose of running the supreme risk. Yet he temporized and vowed he would limit his daring to inspecting the lower end of the island and make sure none of the Indians were camping there. It would be folly for him and his companions to cross in the dark and stumble upon a small camp and thus alarm the village.

He even assured himself it might not be necessary for him to visit the island. The absence of smoke would be a sufficient guarantee.

ABSORBED with this play of self-deceit and knowing his back track was free of danger he moved along rapidly, seldom pausing to examine the forest floor. His objective senses did not sound the alert until he came to a tiny opening where the timber, weakly rooted in rocky soil, had given up the fight and was now resting beneath wild-cherry bushes. It was a pocket of sunshine and the light caused Ballou's eyes to blink for a moment. And the signs were so plain he was compelled to take note of them. The bushes were trampled down in spots and many of the slender branches had been roughly stripped of their acid fruit.

"Bear," he muttered.

Yet when he parted the growth and examined the damp mold he could find no traces of bruin.

He circled the spot warily. If not an animal then the cherry-eater must have been an Indian. Opposed to this alternative was the fact that the bushes had been stripped since the enemy's fright of the night before. He was positive none of the red men had crossed the river since the Loon and Tall Tree were killed. Nor was there any reason why under any circumstances the Indians should pause to gather cherries here when Great Island afforded a large supply of the tiny fruit. He seated himself on the end of a decaying butt and concentrated his faculties. He eliminated the Great Island Indians and the war-band moving northwest toward Pontiac's village. The same process of reasoning would not allow for a lone scout from either band to be the visitor. Both parties of savages had been badly frightened before the cherries were picked. Birds could not have gathered the fruit, for there were branches denuded of every leaf. An animal would have left tracks and chewed the tender twigs.

As he pondered one hand brushed back a drooping branch and rested on the damp surface of the tree trunk. He felt his fingers fit into a notch, too regular in outline to be the work of nature, and too small to be the scar left by an ax. Slowly he shifted his gaze and removed his hand. Then he raised his rifle and stared about the little opening. Satisfied no enemy was about to attack him he again gave his attention to the notch. It was an inch or two deep and four or five inches long and was recently made; much as a man might idly carve in the dead wood with a knife.

He stole from the bushes and entered the timber and cast about for a trail. The matted forest floor had no message for him, however, except in one spot where the damp mold appeared to have been scuffed by a careless step.

"Trade Knife would dare come over here if he thought any one was prowling 'round in this neighborhood," he mused. "But if he came it would be to scout, not to eat cherries. No, it wa'n't the Knife. Then who'n —— has been here within the last few hours?"

The solution of the puzzle had advanced none after he had exhausted his powers of reasoning. To ease his mind Ballou finally decided that whoever had eaten the cherries and carved the log was far away by this time. He dismissed the problem temporarily and proceeded to execute his daring plan. He passed within a short distance of his two friends without being detected and kept on, parallel to the river, until he believed he was abreast of the lower end of the island. Turning south he was soon among the bushes on the bank and scanning the stream in both directions. There were no signs of life except the lazy threads of smoke at the head of the island.

Moving up-stream a short distance he

searched under the overhanging boughs and bushes until he found what he wanted; a mass of grass and reeds supported on a tangle of deadwood, a bit of drift hung up by the spring "fresh." On it he placed his rifle and powder-horn and covered them with river-grass, and then took time to thatch his hat with grass. Working with great care he moved the little raft from the stones into the water and submerged himself on the downstream side of it. It was slow work urging the patch of débris from the shallows toward midstream as he dared not allow more than the top of his thatched head to show.

As the water deepened his task became easier, yet calling for more finesse. He swam on his side, taking care to move very slowly as he forced the sticks and grass diagonally across the stream. He must not miss the end of the island, nor must he neglect to permit his strange cover to drift erratically at times as if responding to the whims of the current. At last the drift grounded within twenty feet of the bank. For ten minutes Ballou remained with only his nose and eyes above water.

Then he gently withdrew his rifle and powder-horn and ran a great risk of discovery in crawling ashore. He crouched at the foot of the bank, with the bushes concealing him and again patiently waited until convinced no eye had witnessed his landing.

Crawling up the bank and standing erect he remained motionless until his leggings and hunting-shirt ceased dripping. Ancient trails, a foot and a half wide and worn half a foot deep by innumerable moccasins, traversed the island from tip to tip and side to side. Ballou struck into one of these that led toward the village and advanced with extreme caution. He came to openings where the trunks of trees, cleared of their boughs and eaten into by flames, told of the terrible ordeals of the torture-post. Old arrow-heads, and other implements of the war and the chase, all fashioned from stone, were scattered about these openings and were eloquent of the days when no white man had been in North America. Had Ballou shared Black Beaver's superstitious fancies he would have found the deep trail crowded with the ghosts of yesteryears.

Being of a prosaic temperament he viewed these odds and ends of cultural development as so much clutter, and had no comprehension whatever of the fact that the history of a people may be recovered from kitchen-middens. He had not the slightest curiosity as to the red man's origin; nor ever a thought for the self-evident truth that the "historic" period of the Indian compared with the "prehistoric," or unwritten period, is as a grain of sand to a sea-beach. He knew one thing—Nell Marks was a captive and must be rescued.

The woods were very quiet. There seemed to be no men from the village out for game. Once, when the trail swung close to the bank, a water-rat sent Ballou to cover by splashing into the stream. The white man's furtive figure glided to a tree that perhaps was a sturdy sapling when Captain John Smith first met the Conestoga (Sasquesahannocks he called them). He waited for several minutes before proceeding another rod.

It was a strange working of fate that brought Black Beaver back to the ancestral home of his all but exterminated people. This thought was entirely apart from Ballou's speculations. That Black Beaver, or any other Indian, could have a genuine attachment for any particular locale would have appealed to him as being a quaint conceit. He would as quickly attribute such a sentiment to a bear.

Far off to the left rose a wild quavering cry, and Ballou, despite his self-control, felt more concern than if it had been a war-whoop. It was the voice he and his friends had heard the night before; and he dropped to the ground and glanced about as if expecting a reappearance of the ghastly visage, although the creature, or man, or thing, must have been at a considerable distance.

He remained on the ground a few minutes, his nerves somewhat shaken, and then told himself that the Indians at the head of the island must have heard the unnatural voice and would either be coming to investigate it, or would be afraid and would refuse to leave the village. But no stealthy, flitting forms showed up the trail, or under the gloomy arches of the deep wood.

"They must 'a' heard it," he murmured. "And they're scared stiff. But what the —— is it?"

He resumed his advance, believing he was concerned only with the immediate task of reconnoitering the village, but he soon discovered he had a most disagreeable companion—the memory of the fearful, pallid face staring and gaping at him by the firelight of last night's camp. While trying to erase the picture from his mind he was recalling that Black Beaver had pronounced it to be a False-face on a cannibal hunt.

"I don't care a —— what it was, or is!" he fiercely told himself and with a defiant glare at the forest on his left.

In the next instance he was admitting it could scarcely be a human countenance he had seen. However, he was not quite orthodox enough to accept it as the devil, or one of his emissaries. This failure to classify it as either human or demon left him perplexed and perturbed. Had not his business concerned the rescue of Nell Marks he would have slipped into the river and have risked discovery and pursuit rather than to linger on the island.

"No matter what it is I'll work ahead," he muttered. "All the fiends from —— couldn't keep Hance Whit from hunting for her. And I love her as much as he does."

Once more the voice sounded but Ballou could not tell whether it was nearer, or receding. He tried to believe the latter. Its effect on him was to divert his attention from the path ahead. He practised ordinary woodcraft by instinct, but his cunning was not up to its maximum. Strive as he would against the inclination he must be shifting his gaze continually to the left, and each time he expected to behold the pallid features and long black hair and lifeless, staring eyes. The face reminded him of a dead man's face. That was it. A dead man's face rather than the Conestoga's wooden mask. And it was the face of a man who died convulsed by awful fear. He had listened to innumerable stories of ghostly visitations. He lived in a time when the return of the dead to an earthly plane was firmly believed in by many men of all degrees.

"That's what it must have been," he decided. "The ghost of a man who died in a mortally cruel fashion. It acted scared last night. Just goes round blatting but can't hurt any one any more than the shadow of a tree can."

Somehow this conclusion steadied his nerves. It had been his failure to explain the unearthly looking thing and its weird cry, rather than the truth, that had disturbed him. Until he could find a name for it his mind would be troubled, just as it was when he found a sign in the forest which he was unable to read. To accept it as a ghost eliminated a host of doubts. He began to give shrewder attention to the path ahead.

Suddenly he halted and stared questioningly at something in the trail. He first thought it was a coiled serpent, but then discovered there was no sign of a head. Further study told him it was a heap of wampum, the colored beads giving it the scaly appearance of some reptilian form. Next he observed it was a huge belt instead of several strings of wampum. It was highly valued by the Indians who had lost it.

Very likely the bearer had been overwhelmed with fright at the sound of the voice and had dropped the belt while frantically running to the village. If not recently lost it would have been found before this. Now that it was lost a search would shortly be made for it. The voice was holding the savages close to the village. If he would complete his scout Ballou realized he had no time to lose.

Trailing his rifle he glided to within a foot of the belt and halted. It had been used in the French-Indian war. There were the diamond shapes so often employed by the French for decorative effect. It was several inches wide and several feet in length. It must have been preserved as a great treasure, but Ballou could not explain its presence on Great Island unless some of Pontiac's, or Tamaque's warriors were taking it to the Long House in one more effort to wean the Iroquois from Sir William Johnson. The Senecas from the beginning had allied themselves with the Ohio tribes. It was not impossible that, with the exception of Sir William's Mohawks, the rest of the Long House might be induced to enter a similar allegiance.

If this reasoning were correct Ballou knew the loss of the belt would greatly delay, if not prevent, any such alliance. It was his duty to hide or destroy it. Thinking to throw it into the river he stooped forward to pick it up.

He had only time to notice that the belt was arranged in a peculiar manner for an article dropped by a running man. Barely had this first flicker of suspicion entered his mind before he had let go of his rifle and was clawing with both hands in a mad endeavor to tear a noose from his neck. And as he fought, his breath cut off, strong hands seized his legs and arms. Through his muffled senses came a voice exulting:

"We've trapped the ghost that cries and makes your hearts weak! The wolf has walked into the trap!"

Then all was darkness and nothingness.

CHAPTER V

WHEN GHOSTS WALK

WHEN Ballou recovered his senses his head was aching, his legs and arms were tied, and he was in the Indian village. His throat still smarted from strangling pressure of the rawhide thong. He heard the renegade triumphantly boasting:

"This is the man who killed the Loon and Tall Tree. This is the man who hides in the woods and makes your hearts weak by laughing like a ghost. This is the man you would not go out and find. The Trade Knife goes out and baits a trap. He was not afraid of ghosts, for his medicine—the medicine of the knife—told him it was this man, not a ghost. Two Shawnees and a Mingo went with me. Tamaque's warriors were afraid and kept in the village with their blankets over their heads."

"The Trade Knife is very sharp," boomed the chief's deep voice, "but let it be careful. It has two cutting edges. It can cut two ways. The Trade Knife's tongue is very sharp. Let it speak slowly. The Trade Knife has done well. Tamaque names him a big warrior. But Tamaque is chief and his heart is not weak. Let Tamaque's new son walk slowly in passing warriors who earned their names before Braddock was killed."

Lessening his tone of exultation the renegade made haste to deny:

"The Trade Knife did not say Tamaque, his father, is weak of heart; or that his warriors are not brave men. But it was the Knife who trapped this white 'ghost.' Did he not perch in a tree like a turkey and drop a noose over the white man's head while three red men jumped on the man and held him down? That is as well known as if talked into much wampum. Tamaque is a great chief and the Trade Knife will follow no other. Has not Pontiac of the Ottawas sent for the Knife to sit at the Three Fires? But has Pontiac ever seen his face? My brothers know he has not. I follow my red father, Tamaque, chief of the Unàlachtigo Leni-lenape."

"It is good," said the deep voice of Tamaque, or King Beaver as the English called him. "Our son has trapped a rat. It is good."

Ballou opened his eyes. Savages were sitting cross legged around him. The Trade Knife, hideously painted with red, white and black stripes up and down and across his face, was standing at his feet. Tamaque was seated on a wolf-robe at one side, smoking a long-stemmed soap-stone pipe. The chief blew a puff of smoke at the sun and remarked—

"The rat looks at us."

The Trade Knife stepped to the prisoner's side and drawing a long butcher-knife exulted:

"Ho, ho! The medicine of the Knife has trapped the rat. White man, look at me, who was christened La Plantz, French born and reared, but who early learned that the true life is the life of the red men. Learn, *monsieur*, that it takes a Frenchman to trap a Frenchman."

He spoke in French.

"It takes a renegade to trap a Frenchman," corrected Ballou. "We come from the same race, but 'tis a pity you had not died before sinking to this beastly red level."

"*Sacré!* You talk foolish. Wait until tonight and——"

"Is the white girl in this camp?"

"—the Indians, like so many red imps——"

"Is Nell Marks, the Quaker girl, in this camp?"

"—shall slowly roast you——"

"Is Nell Marks here? The girl I told you about in Carlisle?"

"—with little fires made of splinters stuck in your stupid hide——"

"Dog! Is Nell Marks here?"

"No. —— you!" roared the Knife. "Can't you understand I tricked you, decoyed you here to lay you by the heels and feed you to red fire? She was never brought here. You will never see her again. She was taken to Pontiac's camp on her way to Butte des Morts."

"The Hill of the Dead. On the Fox River," groaned Ballou.

"*Ehê! Monsieur* forgets to be polite. He would question where we would lodge our fair guest."

"There is no question where you will lodge before many sleeps, La Plantz," hoarsely retorted Ballou.

These exchanges made the chief uneasy. He thrust forward his head and complained—

"There is too much talk Tamaque does not understand."

"He says you are a squaw and that he is the real leader of these warriors," Ballou promptly informed him in the Delaware tongue.

With a yell of rage the renegade lifted his keen weapon, but strong hands caught him and dragged him back. Tamaque lowered at him and warned him:

"Our new son should make a feast to his knife-medicine and learn to be wise. Perhaps all the white blood has not been washed out of him."

"This white man lies," passionately declared the Knife. "His tongue is crooked. He asked about the white girl. I told him he would never see her again."

"The Frenchman lied. I did not make the ghost voice. But there is a ghost near this village that cries out because a white girl is held prisoner by Tamaque, chief of the Leni-lenape," said Ballou.

Tamaque, a very brave man, was no different from his meanest follower when ghosts were to be reckoned with. With a slight shiver he protested:

"The white girl is not here. Why should a Leni-lenape man fear a white ghost? Why should a red ghost cry out because I take white prisoners? Let the ghost go to Pontiac, or to the Hill of the Dead, where the Fox Indians were killed until they threw down their bows and guns, if it would see the white girl."

Ballou was now convinced that Trade Knife had told the truth. Nell Marks was not on Great Island. The renegade had said she was there so as to trap any who might come searching for her. The Knife seemed to be reading the prisoner's thoughts, for he demanded of Tamaque:

"Make him tell how many white men came with him. Make him tell where they are. He never came here alone. Make him tell how he killed two of Tamaque's men last night without spilling blood."

"I need no help when I seek the lost," spoke up Ballou. "I have seen none of the Leni-lenape until now. There is none of Tamaque's men who have seen me about this island."

"There was a face floating in the water my warriors say. Tamaque did not see it," muttered the chief, his gaze roving uneasily over the circle of painted faces.

"It was the face of a bad spirit. It had no body," gravely declared a middle-aged warrior. "The white man did not drag the Tall Tree to the bottom of the river."

"He killed the Loon while he slept," insisted Trade Knife.

"The Loon was my brother," spoke up another warrior. "He was a very brave man. He was not drunk last night. No white man could steal upon him and kill him so quick he could not cry out. No man could kill him without leaving signs of a big fight; without leaving blood on the ground."

"Monsieur Ballou, such are their cursed superstitions," said Trade Knife to the prisoner; and his voice was soft with regret. "Of course I know it was some trick. I make *monsieur* my compliments for being very cunning."

"But it's worrying you some to know just how it was done," taunted Ballou.

Tamaque, disliking these asides which he could not understand, harshly broke in:

"The white man shall tell the other things. He shall tell how many men came with him."

"Give me some warriors and I will cross the river and find them and drag them here," said the Knife.

But no savage in the circle cared to venture upon the water just yet, and Tamaque could not compel service. His men could leave him at any moment and for any whim. He would remain a great war-chief and leader only so long as his people were pleased to follow him.

"There is much time to find white men," he muttered.

Trade Knife concealed his disappointment and tapped the handle of his knife and reminded the chief:

"The Leni-lenape, the Shawnees, and the Mingoes have seen how strong is my medicine. It has brought them this prisoner. And did it not tell us we should get scalps by going to Bushy Run, that settlers were there, waiting to be killed, although our scouts said no white men were there?"

"It is true," admitted Tamaque.

"And now it tells us to cross the river and hunt for white men. Let me go with a band of warriors," eagerly urged the renegade.

The chief was wavering. If some of his young men should volunteer for the service he could not refuse them. Alarmed for the safety of his two friends Ballou interposed:

"Did the Knife's medicine tell Tamaque that he would lose more men than he killed? Did it tell him he would lose warriors at the Marks cabin and at the Byerly cabin, and that many men would be killed by the rangers? How strong is the Frenchman's medicine?"

With a snarl the renegade would have flung himself on the prisoner had not several warriors seized him and flung him back. Tamaque stood up and his deep voice warned:

"Let our new son die if he can not learn to walk in our tracks. The medicine of the Knife is strong, but sometimes it tells only half of things. It is true my men took scalps as the Knife promised. And they lost many scalps. We will send no more men out to follow the medicine of the Knife until the prisoner has been burned. Let no man harm him until he is tied to the stake."

"Yo-hah!" approved the warriors in chorus.

None of them relished the proposed trip across the river and all favored the torture of Ballou. None believed that the prisoner was responsible for the death of the Loon and Tall Tree. For there was the spirit face in the water which many had seen when the Tree was dragged down never to reappear. While the Loon's disappearance might always remain a mystery there could be no doubt in their minds about the Tree's fate. A cannibal ghost had devoured him; else his body would have reappeared.

TAMAQUE was of a shrewd mind and realized action was good for his followers. He gave an order, and with whoops of joy the savages scattered; some to collect fuel to heap about the charred trunk of a tree that for more than a generation had served as a torture-post, and some to prepare the long rope of rawhide that would be used in securing the victim to the tree without prohibiting him from moving about within a certain narrow space. The Trade Knife was disappointed and yet inclined to gloat.

Holding his hands behind him to proclaim his peaceful intentions he kneeled beside Ballou and muttered:

"—— you! At least you will roast. Down in Carlisle you thought I was of French blood, eh? Name of the ——! There is but one blood for me—red. I was born wrong. I have lived wrong. I will die as I have lived. I have seen white and red men roasted. The priests will tell you I am bound for ——. Without doubt, *monsieur*, the black robes have the right of it. But I will count many coups before the —— fries me."

As Ballou stared up into the malignant face he was wondrously calm for a man about to meet a terrible death. He was convinced that the fellow bending over him was half mad. No normal man could be as he was. Now he was glad the girl was not on the island. Better any Indian village than in proximity of such a creature. He muttered:

"You poor devil! I'll die by inches and die slow. But there will be an end even to Delaware torture. But you will die through all eternity. You poor devil!"

This contempt, almost touched by pity, exasperated the Trade Knife more than an outburst of rage, or a volley of abuse. He whipped forward a hand and struck Ballou across the face. Instantly he was hauled back. Ballou called after him:

"La Plantz, you should die a hundred deaths for what you have done. But my medicine tells me you shall die by my hand for that blow."

Tamaque angrily warned the renegade: "Let the Knife now be very careful. Let him be very careful."

Then he stepped forward to the prisoner and gently said:

"The white man must die, but Tamaque would have stopped that blow. Tamaque believes the white man is very brave. He believes he will do the Unalachtigo great honor by dying like a brave man. It will take two sleeps to kill the white man. But if he tells if he made the ghost-voice the Leni-lenape heard last night and this day he shall die very quickly."

Ballou pondered a bit; then replied:

"My medicine has sharp eyes. It sees a man trying to scalp a man near a burning fence. The dead man went to Tamaque and called him friend. He was shot in the back. That white man's daughter was carried off by Tamaque's band."

"The white man was in the Marks cabin," grunted the chief.

"He was not in the cabin."

Tamaque stared at him steadily for a few moments, and muttered—

"The white man's tongue is straight."

"There is a ghost following Tamaque. It is the ghost of Marks, the man who called Tamaque brother, and who trusted him; or it is the ghost of the white girl."

"The white woman was sent north. She has been sold. She is not a ghost," uneasily replied the chief. Then suspiciously, "Make Tamaque believe the white man is not playing a trick on the Unalachtigo and he shall die quick."

He had hardly spoken before there came a sound of the voice. It was pitched high, like that of a woman screaming in mortal agony, then dropping to a sobbing, minor note. The effect on the savages was remarkable. Some leaped to secure their weapons. Others remained incapable of motion. Even the renegade stared wildly about the opening and hoarsely exclaimed: "Head of the ——! And I have believed it was *monsieur*, who is soon to roast!"

Ballou loudly called out—

"The ghost is after the Frenchman who turned red."

By a mighty effort Tamaque suppressed all symptoms of uneasiness, and said:

"The white man plays no trick. There is a ghost in the woods that has had no feast. Perhaps the white man will be his feast."

This suggestion was greedily accepted by the warriors. Ballou warned them:

"Let the chief of the Turkey band be very wise. Let him step carefully. Let him look into the heart of the Trade Knife and see it is a lie. The ghost-voice tells the Leni-lenape that I am not to be harmed."

Again the weird, wild cry rang through the forest. No one could tell whether it came from the southern shore of the island, or from the southern bank of the river. Tamaque squatted on his wolf-robe, a strong medicine in itself, and commanded:

"Let the white man's arms be unfastened. Let him sit up and be given meat. But let the warriors watch him."

Ballou's wrist bonds were removed, also the thong from around his neck. The change of position was most welcome and for several minutes he rocked forward and back and rubbed his hands to restore the circulation. Meat was taken from a kettle and served him on a platter of bark. Trade Knife watched him with a malevolent smile and mocked:

"*Monsieur* walked right into the trap. And he is not the first. He is like a child. He sees something bright on the ground and must pick it up. He never thinks to look in the tree and see what strange fruit grows there. The *mademoiselle* who depends on him for a rescue is unfortunate."

"*Mademoiselle* is well guarded," replied Ballou as he ate of the meat. "She is surrounded by a power that laughs at all red men and renegades."

"But it could not save the old man, her father. *Monsieur* is unlucky it does not come to help him."

"It has helped me. I am sitting up and eating meat. And I am not dead yet."

"Bah! Why keep up the play? We two know it is one of your friends trying to frighten these red children. Your luck is very bad, *monsieur*. To be dead and out of the path of harm is good. But to be half dead under Tamaque's cunning torture is to live on the threshold of ——."

Ballou continued eating and made no reply. He was thoroughly familiar with the evil technique of the savage in inflicting pain. He would essay to appear courageous before the savages, but to poise before the Frenchman as one indifferent would be silly braggadocio. There was but one hope for him, a rescue by his two friends or an attempt at rescue which might grant him the boon of a speedy death.

Tamaque gave an order in a low voice, and several warriors reluctantly filed into the forest. They were to scour the island; and Ballou feared his friends might be captured. He could not conceal his apprehension from the evil eyes now studying his averted face. The Trade Knife chuckled and taunted:

"Hoof of the ——! *Monsieur* begins to see things in their true light. We have no squaws here to fill *monsieur* with splinters until he looks like a quill-pig, and the men may be a bit rough. Yet they will do their best."

"I'm not dead yet," snarled Ballou, beginning to weaken under the Knife's steady persecution.

Then he caught himself up and closed his ears by concentrating his thoughts on his friends. The Knife talked on for some minutes and began to realize his threats were having no effect. Tiring of the sport he exclaimed:

"Holy pipe!" Then in the Delaware

tongue—"Let men go with me across the river and hunt for this man's friends."

This time the chief did not object, and said:

"If some of my young men will go with my son it is good. The Trade Knife knows the white man's ways. If he brings in another prisoner, or a scalp, he shall have a new name."

The knowledge that the ghost-voice was either on the island, or on the south bank of the river, made the north bank more attractive; and warriors, who could not have been induced earlier in the morning to make the crossing, were now ready to follow their adopted brother. The Knife picked up his musket and, followed by five young men ambitious to score a notable coup, disappeared down a leafy tunnel of a path. Tamaque eyed the prisoner thoughtfully for a time; and then asked—

"Did the white man ever see the ghost that cries out?"

"He saw it last night," Ballou gravely informed him. "It spoke to him. First it was the head of the man Marks, who believed Tamaque was his friend. When it talked it changed to the head of a red woman. The woman's head said that a long, long time ago she was a Seneca woman, Ga-go-sa Honunnateseta (Keeper of the False-faces). She now leads the ghost False-faces. She said they are hunting for a white man who was once a Frenchman. Tamaque has heard her voice trying to call that Frenchman into the woods where the ghosts can catch him."

The chief brooded over this statement for some time. He found it logical and, inasmuch as it contained no threats against the Delaware and their allies, pleasing. But there was always the probability of the prisoner's inclination to save himself through false speaking. Glancing up the chief suddenly asked—

"How do the Leni-lenape know the ghost is not after their prisoner?"

"The ghost has seen me and spoken to me and passed by me. She does not want me."

The chief ordered that Ballou's hands be tied behind his back, but not too tightly, and detailed two warriors to keep close watch over him. Then he entered the woods alone. The rest of the band remained by the kettles, eating or sleeping, or nervously waiting for the voice to sound again. The tiny black flies annoyed the prisoner greatly until one of his guards whisked them away with a small branch. At frequent intervals water was brought for him to drink, for the heat in the village was intense. But none of these little attentions deceived Ballou any. He knew the red man could be very gentle and considerate when about to inflict the torture.

THE sun crossed the zenith and slipped half-way down the sky before any of the scouts returned. Tamaque was one of the last to come in, and as he was throwing aside his ax and gun a yell of discovery, followed by a mournful howling, brought every warrior to his feet and sent all but the two guards running to the river bank. By the screams of rage soon resounding from the edge of the water Ballou knew something had happened to excite the savages to a high pitch of fury. He was not long kept in suspense.

Indians appeared at the mouth of a path, Tamaque coming first. Behind him walked the Trade Knife, his dark eyes glittering wolfishly. Then followed four men carrying two stretchers improvised from saplings. On these reposed the stark figures of the Loon and Tall Tree. Both had been scalped, while the Loon's head had been stripped from ear to ear and from forehead to the nape of the neck.

The stretchers were deposited by the bushes at the edge of the clearing. With folded arms and bowed head Tamaque stood and stared down at the dead men. Trade Knife dramatically denounced:

"There is the man who killed them!" And he shook his ax at Ballou. "Who now says my medicine is weak?"

The savages surged forward to take an immediate vengeance, but the deep voice of the chief halted them.

"Do my children forget what we will do after the sun leaves the sky? Do my children wish to see this man die quick when he can be kept alive for two or three sleeps? If he has killed our two brothers then he is a very brave man, and the Leni-lenape can learn from him how a brave man should die. The Leni-lenape kill quickly only those who are cowards. This man has won a brave death. He shall not be cheated. Now let our new brother and son tell us what he found."

The Knife, hugely pleased to be the center of the savages' fierce attention, waited a few minutes as was required by Indian etiquette, and then explained:

"We found the Loon and Tall Tree hidden among rocks and covered with brush. One branch had green leaves on it, and the sap was still wet. We looked to learn how a branch could grow when not fastened to a tree. We found our two brothers. Then we searched for some trail of the white man, or his friends, leading to or from the rocks, but found nothing."

Ballou knew this was because the dead men had been conveyed to the spot by water.

"We went back into the woods and looked about," continued the Knife. "We found no fresh trails. But we did find where something had walked like a horse through the bushes, beating them down and stripping off the green leaves. But there were no tracks on the ground."

His audience shivered at this suggestion of the supernatural. The Knife resumed: "Then we came back and brought the Loon and the Tall Tree over here. I have spoken."

After a long pause Tamaque took up the talk, and said:

"It is bad that our new son did not find a trail. He talks like a foolish man when he says the prisoner killed our brothers. Last night some of you saw a ghost-face on the water, and saw it carry the Tall Tree away. This white man is not a ghost. He did not kill the Tree. Could he kill the Loon and take his body away without the Loon calling out to his brothers? There is no blood on the river bank. Could he take the two men across the river and hide them and not leave a trail on the other shore? This is a bad camp. We will make a feast for the ghosts and give them a white man tonight. Then we will go away from this place."

Ballou could not restrain his gaze from returning to the visage of the Indian he had slain. The fellow had been very muscular. But what held Ballou's attention were the curious markings of the face and the removal of the entire scalp. For he was remembering it was this savage's appearance that Enoch Meekly had endeavored to copy in turning himself into a red man. And the resemblance was striking, even to the bloody head.

Some of the Indians, shaken by the Knife's discovery, began demanding strong drink. Tamaque hesitated, then ordered that all weapons should be collected and placed in the care of two of the older warriors, who were to refrain from liquor. This was quickly done, and the weapons were taken beyond the edge of the clearing and concealed. Then Tamaque took one warrior and hastened into the woods.

They soon returned with an eight-gallon keg of rum, once a part of the stock of some murdered English trader. With whoops of joy the men gathered around the keg. Tamaque brought a pewter mug from one of the huts and drank a stiff dram. Then in turn each warrior stepped forward and received a drink. The liquor quickly took effect, and eyes glittered ferociously and lips were smacked hungrily as the men glared at the prisoner, and then at the sun now sinking below the western ridge. Trade Knife laughed silently as he observed Ballou's strained countenance.

In French he remarked:

"*Monsieur* is disturbed. *Monsieur* is particular about his comfort. He fears his night's rest will be broken.

Then explosively and with honest admiration, he cried:

"By the name! But they are cunning enough with the torture when sober. And when drunk on English rum! *Pardieu!* Then, as *monsieur* must soon agree, they are worse than demons from the pit. If *monsieur* would only explain to me the trick of the floating face that dragged the Tree under water I will use my great influence and save him much suffering."

"Go to —— where you belong, and where you will soon wind up," growled Ballou.

This show of anger pleased the Knife immensely, and with much chuckling he continued:

"Behold how fate rewards us! I was born wrong and have lived wrong, and always have preferred red men to white. Yet I am alive and contented. But alas! Poor *monsieur*. He has believed what the black robes say; and he will soon die a very disagreeable death. Behold, these red men are afraid of ghosts. Many white men are afraid of the devil. But the Trade Knife fears nothing. For he believes he is the devil."

With this shocking speech the wretch gave way to a paroxysm of unnatural laughter until even the savages eyed him uneasily.

Ballou turned his head and stared at the red ball now more than half concealed by the ridge. It was his hour-glass. He would begin to die when it vanished. And yet hope would not entirely die. Or perhaps it was more his inability to conceive of himself being dead like the Loon and Tall Tree. When for a few moments he could focus his mind on the grim fact he must suffer cruelly, that it would be a terrible affliction should he see another sun, there would come the chill of the tomb over his soul and an overwhelming sense of hopelessness.

Mercifully enough this realization of the inevitable could endure only for the fragment of a minute, and then his mind was reacting and demanding to know the whereabouts of Meekly and the Conestoga. Did they know he was a prisoner? Would they allow him to die after the Indian fashion when from the darkness a kindly bullet would permit him to make a quick exit? And above all else, where was Nell Marks, and would she ever escape from the savages? Would she ever know how he finished with life? He hoped not; and in the next thought he was hoping she would learn the truth.

If she were returned to her people, Hance Whit, for all his jealous hate, would tell her. Meekly and the Beaver would learn of his predicament within the first hour of dusk: surely one of them would survive to take the story down the Susquehanna. He did not wish her to learn the manner of his going; yet it would be a comforting thought to take with him to believe she some time would be told that he had died in an attempt to rescue her.

As the dusk gathered and the savages grew demoniacal under the influence of the fiery liquor Ballou felt an unnatural composure. He watched their eager preparations for torturing him and felt convinced his old friend Meekly would never permit him to suffer. Death in itself was an incident; and death by violence was the price usually paid by those who held the shifting frontiers.

The Trade Knife strode to Tamaque and talked earnestly. The chief, who had drunk less than any of his followers, bowed in approbation. He picked up the keg and sternly called to his men not to follow him. Filled with a terrible lust for strong drink they glared at him like so many famished wolves, and more than one hand fumbled at an empty girdle. Tamaque disappeared in the forest. Several braves started as if to follow him, but the Knife held them back by proclaiming:

"We will finish the milk after we have fed the white man to the ghosts. Let my brothers remember that this white man is very brave, and must be a long time dying. Let us keep our hands steady and our eyes clear so he may not cheat us by dying quick."

This appeal fell in with their drunken humor; and they commenced dancing around Ballou and emitted terrific yells. Some reached out and struck at him as though they were holding knives or axes. Some reached his impassive face with their digits and scratched him until the blood came. Ballou showed no signs of seeing or hearing them, and only shifted his position enough to save his eyes.

The Knife sought to get the Indians back before their fury led them to killing the prisoner with their bare hands. They paid no heed to his exhortations excepting a warrior who picked up a stone and tried to brain him. Had not Tamaque reappeared on the scene and forced the men back it is probable that the Knife would have been mauled to death before the prisoner could be tied to the tree.

Tamaque's influence was strong, however, and his diplomacy was considerable. His deep voice finally secured a hearing. He was lavish with promises of more liquor once the white man had gone among the ghosts. Then he warned that ghosts were about and were displeased with some of the Leni-lenape. He soon aroused the superstitious fears of those not too sodden to reason. Then he named the Knife and a middle-aged warrior and told them to make Ballou fast to the long thong suspended at a height of fifteen feet from the tree.

From one of the sober guards he received three skinning-knives and gave orders that no other weapons be brought into the camp. The prospect of beholding suffering stifled the homicidal lust, and the men began a wild dance around the tree.

Ballou's feet were released. His hands were untied long enough for the Knife to strip off his hunting-shirt, and were then secured again behind his back. When his ankle thongs were being removed Ballou had entertained a wild plan of making a sudden dash toward the river, but found he could scarcely stand, so benumbed were his feet and legs. The end of the rawhide rope was made fast to his wrist thongs.

"A very brave man is waiting to show us how a brave man dies," announced the Knife.

Tamaque pushed the dancers back and examined the fuel heaped about the tree at a distance of some four feet from the trunk. Where he found too much brush, or too dry for a slow death, he carefully reduced the amount. At last he was satisfied with conditions and directed:

"Let the brother of the Loon paint the man for the fire."

A warrior filled a bark platter with charcoal from one of the fires and leaping the circle of brush smeared Ballou's chest and face. As he finished he thrust the end of a charred stick into the prisoner's mouth. Ballou promptly kicked him in the pit of the stomach and sent him gasping for breath out of the circle. This reprisal was warmly approved by the onlookers and the infuriated savage was restrained from attacking the prisoner a second time.

"Yo-hah! We now know he is a brave man and has a stout heart!" cried Tamaque. "Let us have much light."

Fresh fuel was thrown on the cooking-fires and the village was soon brightly illumined by the leaping flames, while the surrounding forest became a shadowy wall. Even then, with his ordeal about to begin, Ballou could not make the scene seem real. He stared at the dancing figures as if viewing them from far off; and the insane yelling and yowling, and the thud of their feet smacking the ground, seemed to him to be coming from a great distance.

"Now let the scout-brother of the Tall Tree bring the little pieces of wood," ordered the chief.

A young warrior ran through the circle of dancers carrying a section of a pine stump. The chief gave him a knife and stood at his side as he fashioned the resinous wood into sharp splinters.

"Let our new son heat the gun-barrel," was the chief's next command.

Trade Knife secured a trade musket and thrust the barrel into the coals of the central fire.

THE dance was resumed. The savages bent half double, with their heads hanging almost to their knees, or with heads thrown back until they could not see the ground. They lifted their legs stiffly and awkwardly and brought the ball and heel smartly down until the united impact of their falling feet could easily be heard across the river. As they grotesquely moved around the tree some allowed their arms and hands to hang limply before them, others indulged in a fierce pantomime of stabbing and scalping. And Ballou watched them as one looks on fearful shapes in a dream.

"Let the Loon's brother begin making the little fires," rumbled the chief's heavy voice.

This warrior, still suffering from the kick, howled like a wolf and bounded over the circle of fuel. Standing before Ballou he raised both hands high above his head and continued his howling; and each hand was filled with splinters. Ballou promptly kicked him again, this time injuring him so severely that he could not rise. Tamaque shouted—

"Throw rawhide around the white man's legs so he can not move them."

Two warriors seized the ends of a strip of rawhide and ran to the tree, separating so as to pass on each side. Ballou endeavored to leap over the cord, but one foot was caught and he fell to his knees. Instantly a savage had seized his shoulders from behind and had dragged him back against the tree, while the other made a loop around the free foot.

"A very brave man!" cried Tamaque in high approval.

"Yo-hah!" shouted the warriors.

But the two men holding the prisoner against the tree, and while they were securing his feet with a hobble, suddenly relaxed their efforts. Their hands dropped to their sides. The hobble remained looped around one ankle only. Standing on each side of the prisoner they stared wildly at the forest behind the dancers.

A silence fell on the savage mob as it beheld the two men cease their activities, which the prisoner took advantage of to kick the hobble clear of his leg. The Trade Knife was the next to succumb to the strange spell. For he dropped the red-hot gun-barrel and with a choked cry glared at something beyond the chief. Ballou began to realize that something unusual was interrupting the cruel ceremony; then his eyes discovered the solution; only for a moment he could not understand.

Back in the black tunnel of a path something was moving that gave off light, yet not the light of fire, rather a dull glow which took on an outline. The warriors faced about and beheld it. By degrees it grew more distinct, and the startled savages could make out a distorted face, faintly illumined by a ghastly light. The features were those of a giant, but exaggerated most grotesquely. The parted lips were swollen and the protruding tongue hung below the long chin. On each side of the face hung long wisps of black hair. The eyes were cavernous and awful and were encircled by the ghostly light. But what was most terrifying was the absence of any supporting body.

The visage moved from side to side and up and down as though some monstrous will-o'-the-wisp were clumsily floating up the path. The half-drunken savages cowered and groaned. The brother of the Loon, now on his knees and still clutching the torture splinters in both fists, opened his mouth to yell and uttered no sound.

In a hysteria of rage and fear the Trade Knife seized the butt of the red-hot musket and hurled it toward the apparition. The face abruptly vanished.

"After it! After it! It's a trick!" screamed the renegade.

He proved his own courage by running to the mouth of the path. But none of the Indians cared to follow him. He entered the black tunnel and advanced for a few feet, and then returned, bringing the musket with him. The barrel of the gun was no longer red; and as the Knife thrust it into the fire he upbraided them:

"Why do you wait? Are my brothers afraid of a trick? Let Tamaque send men to catch the man who tries to frighten the warriors of the Unalachtigo."

Tamaque now found his voice, albeit the tone was uneven, and he slowly said:

"If it was a trick the man is scared away. If it was a False-face, then he came for his feast. Let the little fires be lighted."

The Loon's brother, although now able to stand erect, had no stomach for the work, and held back. He did not seem to hear the brave words of the Trade Knife, nor the speech of the chief. With an oath the Knife endeavored to wrest the pine splinters still clutched in the two dark hands. The Loon's brother clung to them convulsively without knowing why he did so. The Knife snatched up a piece of the pine and began fashioning more splinters, and as he worked he loudly announced—

"Your new son and brother will prepare and light the little fires!"

As one emerging from a trance Ballou realized it was in his power to do a service for the Marks girl; and he yelled in English—

"They say she is at the Hill of the Dead on Fox River."

"He calls to the ghosts!" groaned one of the savages.

"He talks to his friends!" furiously corrected the Knife. "It's all a trick! A face made out of wood or bark."

And he worked with feverish haste to complete the necessary number of splinters.

A sepulchral groan down the path answered the renegade; and in increased terror the savages stared at the somber forest. The Knife suspended his labors and waited. Once more the weird light became visible down the path, only this time there was more of it and the outline was greatly elongated and more clearly defined. As it reached the mouth of the path and the faint light of the camp-fires it took on the vague shape of a man but conveyed no suggestion of flesh and blood.

The savages could detect the figure moving without any sound keeping close to the dark trees and gliding to where rested the bodies of the Loon and Tall Tree, where it came to a halt. The warriors sucked in their breath with a sharp hissing sound as they more clearly made out the visitor.

Ballou blinked in amazement at the shocking presentment. He barely sensed that something was tugging at his wrist-cords. For what was holding him spellbound appeared to be the dead warrior, the Loon; only the Loon was there in sight, stretched out in death on a blanket.

It was the same as though the ghost of the slain stood and looked down on the physical shell. There were the same characteristic bars across the face and the same ring of paint encircling the visage. The chest markings were identical. The leggings dripped water, while the entire figure was outlined by the strange, vague light. But what was most unnerving was when the figure slightly turned its back so that the light from the fires fell on the head. The entire top of the head was freshly scalped, even as was the head of the dead man on the blanket.

Ballou felt the cords drop from his wrist and the handle of an ax thrust into his right hand. He felt a hand clutch his arm and begin drawing him back of the tree. And the Black Beaver was whispering—

"Would you die?"

A savage gave a staccato yelp. As an echo the weird voice of the night wanderer rang out back in the woods; the voice that had puzzled both white and red men. And as the sobbing monotone suddenly leaped to a high-pitched scream, the figure with the raw head vanished through the thick timber.

"The devil's come for me!" shrieked the renegade, and he groveled on the ground.

With a moan of abject terror the Loon's brother cried—

"The ghost has taken the white man!"

He pointed a trembling finger at the empty torture circle.

Again the voice rose to an ear-splitting screech, this time sounding very close to the opening. The renegade leaped to his feet, the disappearance of the prisoner routing his terror for the moment. And in a voice almost inarticulate he cried:

"It's a trick! The white man had friends! They've taken him away! Spread out and search the island!"

But another face now appeared above the bush growth; a face that might have belonged to the dead, so cadaverous and thin it was, so dull and fixed were the hollow eyes. The thoroughly frightened wretches stared at this new visitation with no room for thoughts of the prisoner and his disappearance. The Trade Knife, however, was recovering some of his animal courage, and with drawn ax rushed to the bushes, yelling—

"Mask of wood or bark—I'll fix it!"

THE HALTED within three feet of the unnatural visage and drew back his ax. The face remained immobile, expressionless and lifeless, the dull eyes staring at the renegade without seeming to see him. Then the mouth slowly opened and there pealed forth the amazing cry, starting with the low sobbing note and climbing the scale to the poignant pitch of a woman in mortal terror.

The accumulated effect of this outburst was too much for the renegade, and with a yell of terror he dropped his ax and ran back to the fires. As one, the savages became alive with one desire, and, led by Tamaque, the band rushed to the north side of the island and regardless of water-devils plunged in and waded and swam to the north shore of the river. The face vanished from the bush growth. The fires burned lower. A figure squirmed into the opening and crawled about for a minute and then retreated into the woods.

Meekly impatiently asked—

"Git it?"

"Wouldn't quit without it. It's too good a rifle to leave with those skunks. Got my shirt, too. Where's the canoe? Where's the Beaver? Ain't seen him since he cut the rawhide."

"Canoe's near by. At the very tip of the island. Nothing between us and the Alleghany now. The Beaver went ahead to put it in the water. Lucky we found it hid in the bushes. S'pose we must go to Detroit."

"First to Detroit; then to the Hill of the Dead in the Fox country. We may overtake her before she reaches Fox river. They'll travel slower than we do. I shall keep on no matter where the trail leads; but you——"

"Enoch Meekly can go as far as you can once he washes off this paint and the touchwood. Makes me feel like a ghost. Laws! But I was shook from head to heel when that dead man's head come sticking through the bushes. What the —— was it, anyway?"

"It's the same face I caught a glimpse of last night on the north shore. I believe it explains the stripped cherry-bushes and the notch I found cut in a dead tree. I told you about Rickards, who went crazy on the Forbes road and ran back among the Indians. I believe it's Rickards. White man, anyway. The Indians are scared of him and won't dare harm him when they find out he's crazy. He must have followed Tamaque's band up here. The light was bad, but I'm sure it's Rickards."

"Poor cuss! I'm glad I didn't try my rifle on it. Black Beaver says it's a false-face helping his medicine. Better let him opine that. Thought the Beaver would never git you clear of that tree while the Injuns was watching me."

"I felt like a man asleep. All day I had been wondering if you knew I was a prisoner."

Meekly led the way toward the tip of the island and growled:

"Knew you was caught almost as soon 's it happened. 'Twas a fool notion your swimming across with that dry drift. Any Injun seeing it would know some game was being played. They're ain't been any fresh drift in the branch since the last fresh, and you'd have to have a rise of water to set loose anything hung up last spring. The Conestoga and me was close at hand when the Knife found the dead Injuns. I was mortal tempted to take a crack at 'em, but that would 'a' told the whole island you had friends hanging 'round. Funny how they passed by our camp and didn't stumble on to it."

A low signal brought them to a halt. Then the Conestoga was whispering:

"The canoe is in the water, white brothers. But if we stay here we can kill them all. Many ghosts of my people, who lived here many moons ago, are ready to help me. We can stay and take their scalps——"

"I seek that which is lost," impatiently broke in Ballou. "Stay if you will, Black Beaver, but we must go on."

"Then the Beaver goes. His medicine will help find the lost. The Ga-go-sa told me in a dream last night that I should turn into a speckled snake and crawl into every Indian camp."

"Queer how he believes them things," muttered Meekly. "And yet there's medicine and medicine, and some of it is mortal queer."

TO BE CONTINUED

FLOWER CHILD

by Bill Adams

"W'ERE is it you're a-goin' to?" says Liza.
"I'm a-takin' of a trip to sea," says Pete.
"Wot is it that's a-makin' of you do so?"
"There's a somefin' wot's a-both'rin' in me feet."

"W'ere will I next meet up wiv you?" says Liza.
"You can meet me off the Horn, maybe," says Pete;
"Or maybe on the Line, in the Atlantic
Where the outward and the homing clippers meet."

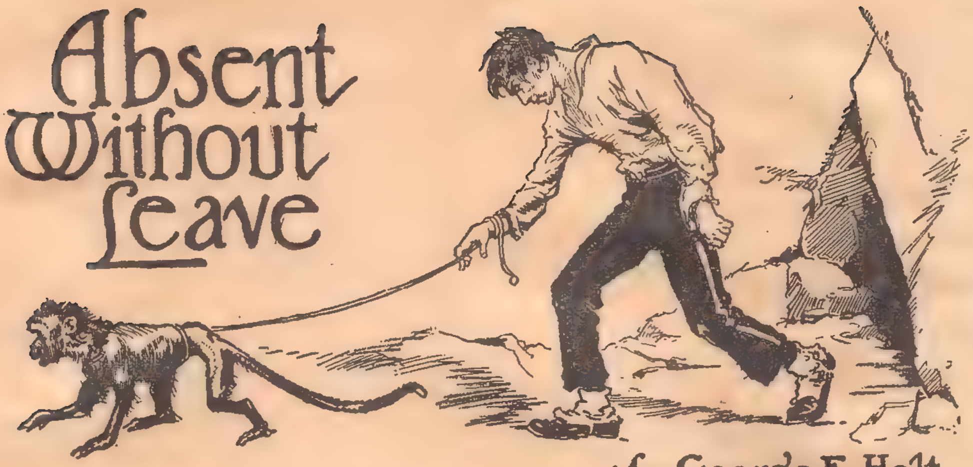
"Oh, it's 'ard to be a pore sad-'earted female
Wiv a man wot's got ter foller the cold sea."
"Does yer fink it's dead soft ter be a sailor,
W'en the ice cakes rides a-cracklin' down ter lee?"

"Oh, Peter, won't yer stay an' pick the flowers
That's a-climbin' up beside the kitchen door?"
"I 'ears the big iron bell break out the hours—
An' there's buds that breaks to blossom off the shore.

"There's flowers fairer far than lady's slippers;
There's blossoms that is sweeter than the rose—
They breaks to brightest bloom beneath the clippers;
S-s-s-h—they're whisp'rin' now—I hears 'em—an' I goes."

"Flower Child," copyright, 1922, by B. M. Adams.

Absent Without Leave



by George E. Holt

Author of "From the Book of Fate."

THE untruthfulness of the British soldier is a matter of common knowledge. Besides which, Thomas Atkins was drunk when these things happened to him, or at least when they began to happen.

Consequently his story is not at all to be believed—if you can explain how he disappeared into an opening in the old city wall of Tangier, and came out into the sunlight of Gibraltar, to draw ten days in guardhouse for absence without leave, and to tell a most startling tale. Wherefore he was much condemned by his superiors and ridiculed by his equals, who charged him with having smoked *keef* in Tangier, and come back without knowing it. Or if you can explain how the monkeys who live on Ape's Hill in Morocco mingle freely with those who live on top of Gibraltar—across twelve miles or more of water—as has been shown that they do.

Thomas Atkins' real name was Geoffrey Atkinson, which was near enough, and he had no reputation for lies out of the ordinary. With some scores of his fellow Tommies he had come to Tangier from the British garrison at Gibraltar on a day's excursion, and, until sunset their red coats were to be seen in most unusual places. Within the red coats were, for the most part, men who had taken advantage of the opportunity to consume a fair ration of the various inebriating beverages offered by the café-keepers of a dozen nationalities who maintain places of business in Tangier. But when the hour came for their boat's return, they were all at the pier not much the worse for their day of liberty. All except Geoffrey Atkinson, that is. Geoffrey was—but that is the matter to be decided.

It is necessary for you to understand—of course you know Gibraltar—that Morocco is only a dozen miles south of The Rock, across the Straits, and that Tangier is the harbor city to which the boats run from Gib. Gibraltar is quite modern and up-to-date all the way through. Morocco, if you scratch it, shows a thousand years old, and if you rub it at all, the veneer comes completely off, and you find yourself in times so old that they are legendary. Some of the still-standing Tangier city wall was built by the Romans when Julius Cæsar was on the throne. And it was built over walls which were there when Moses led the People across the Red Sea. And what is beneath that I do not know; but, you see, Tangier is very, very old. And anything so ancient as that must have many mysteries.

This same ancient city wall is now in the heart of the town, instead of surrounding it, owing to the growth of the community, and houses have been built against it and upon it until it is almost all concealed, and only here and there shows its discolored gray stones. Of course it connects at various places with the "new" inner wall, some of which is as recent of construction as the fifteenth century. And, like all ancient city

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"Absent Without Leave," copyright, 1922, by George E. Holt.

walls, it was originally a honeycomb of passageways and rooms and dungeons and treasure places, and whatnot, most of which have been filled up or walled up or otherwise lost track of. No Moor will investigate such a passageway, for it is infested with evil spirits, and the usual custom is to wall them up when they are encountered in the course of building construction.

At the time that Geoffrey Atkinson, full of mixed liquors and curiosity, and with a little Tetuan monkey which he had bought in the *sok*, perched upon his shoulder, was prowling about the city, the International Committee of Public Works for Morocco had gotten so far along with its program as to have made a large hole in the wall down near the beach gate, where a broad stone stairway was to be put, to afford a short-cut to the Playa. The cutting of this hole had revealed a passageway running along inside the wall, and this revelation had caused the native workmen to depart hurriedly in order to avoid evil jinn. The French-Algerian foreman of the gang—he was an unbeliever and consequently unafraid—was engaged in cursing them fluently in four tongues when Geoffrey Atkinson loitered up, listened with approval, and watched the foreman go off to consult the engineer in charge of the works.

That was the last any one saw of Geoffrey Atkinson until. . . . But his story is told thus:

As soon as the foreman was gone, Geoffrey thought it would be interesting to examine more closely into the passageway. He entered. The monkey jumped from his shoulder, breaking the light cord. Geoffrey grabbed at the beast and missed, followed it for twenty steps and two turns and was completely lost. It was dark, and when he tried to find the entrance, he only got into deeper and deeper darkness. And the passage seemed, he said, to lead downwards. Which is quite probable. There was liquor enough in him so that he did not become frightened—at first; and, finding himself in a passage which was straight and narrow, he pushed ahead, thinking, ignorantly, that there must be an outlet somewhere.

He estimates that he must have walked half a mile before anything happened. Then—he came into a small-domed room which was faintly lighted by means of a small circular window in the top of the dome. Geoffrey grows excited when he tries to tell of the decoration and contents of this room. What he says sounds like a description of the treasure house of Alladin. He says he was too amazed to examine things much, but that there were dozens of caskets filled with gems, and scores of enameled jars filled with gold coins. Furthermore, his monkey was sitting grinning upon one of the jars. He says, too, that he filled his jacket pockets with the jewels—but as he lost the jacket in the rush of later events, that statement lacks proof. Still, it is probable he would have done so.

However, although he had found treasure enough to make him a British peer instead of a British private, he was not out, and out was what he very much desired to be. There were two doors to the room; the one he had entered from, and another. He wanted to return the way he had come. But he had walked about a good deal, and the room was hexagonal, so he was unable to tell which was the doorway he had come through. So he caught the monkey and tied a long gold chain from one of the caskets about its neck, opened both doors, and when the beast decided to proceed, followed it.

After walking for hours he began to get frightened. The liquor had worked off, and it was very dark, and he was hungry, and there seemed no end to the tunnel. Also, something seemed to be following him. But there was nothing to do but push on, which he did until he sank exhausted and fell asleep, holding tightly to the gold chain around the monkey's neck. When he awoke he started again. He says he walked for days, but as he was missing only twenty-four hours this can not be possible. Still, it is a score of miles as the crow flies, or as a straight tunnel would run under the Straits, between Tangier and Gibraltar, and hours in darkness, alone except for a monkey on a string, probably seemed long. It was mid-afternoon when he stumbled blindly into the sunshine halfway up the side of Gibraltar. There was a monkey with him, a monkey with something shiny tied to his neck, who promptly ran up toward the top of the Rock, where some fellows of his reside. Geoffrey could see nothing for several hours after a sentry picked him up near the Alameda Gardens, under the impression that he was drunk. So he is quite unable to tell where the exit of the tunnel is. Gibraltar is full of holes. The sentry decided he was crazy instead of drunk—and I have told you what others thought. I myself—but what I think would not change his story in the slightest respect.

Geoffrey Atkinson further swears that he has seen his monkey among those which steal down from the top of the Rock to commit depredations on fruit trees. He knew it by the piece of chain tied to its neck. But he has never been able to catch it.

THE SWASTIKA CROSS

by H. P.

THAT form of the cross which is known as the Swastika was common on this continent many centuries before Columbus came. Eastern tourists to southern Arizona discovered it twenty years ago and had rings shaped in the design. These were called "good-luck" rings, and similar names. Few of those tourists, or the people who through them were made familiar with the Swastika, realized the great antiquity of this symbol. It was found worked in Navaho blankets and painted on Navaho altar floors. It was also common among the Zuñi and Papago Indians. Churchward in his "Signs and Symbols of Primordial Man" gives it as the sacred totem of the Crow Indians, both river and mountain divisions.

Father De Smets, the great missionary to the Western Indians, in describing the religious ceremony of the Assiniboins, in saluting the sun, the four winds and water, says that their medicine-men made the cross when they held up the smoking calumet to the sun, to the "Four Cardinal Points, and each time to the earth." In facing the four points the medicine-man formed a cross, and the smoke blown by the winds formed the right angles. The same suggestion of the Swastika is found by Colonel Henry Inman in describing ("The Old Santa Fé Trail") the Cheyenne's practise of offering the pipe to the sun, earth and winds.

In the annual Archeological Report (1914) issued by the Minister of Education of Ontario is a most scholarly article on "The Pre-Christian Cross" by the Very Rev. W. R. Harris. In that portion dealing with the Swastika form he gives an exhaustive summary of peoples and places where the symbol has been found.

"This mysterious symbol," he says, "wherever found, in Europe, Asia, northern Africa or America, marks the migration of a great and numerous race of a common origin, or of common religious affiliations."

His excellent summary, further condensed, furnishes the following as some of the Swastika occurrences:

Symbol of the water god of the Gauls, and known to French and German anthropologists as the Gramponne.

Known as the "Hammer of Thor," war-god of the Scandinavians.

Schliemann found it cut in the temple stones he dug from the ruins of Troy.

Désiré Charney found it burned in the terra-cotta urns in the pre-Toltec city of Teotihucan, Mexico.

Icon of ancient Phœnicians, and found in the Temple of Gigantea.

Carved on the sacrificial stones by the Brahmans in the Cave of Elephants, India.

"Fylfot" cross of Buddha, and to be seen on the breast of Buddha in China today.

Found as an ornamentation in ancient temples of India, Burma, Cambodia, Java and Korea.

Symbol of worship among the Ladacks, a Buddhist community in Gebel-Silsili, land of Edfou, Egypt.

Carried by Cedric the Gaul on the sail of his ship, 150 B.C.

Sign of god of the winds among the pagan Icelanders. Used by Celtic Druids in Scotland and Ireland.

Cut in the tomb of Osiris excavated in Abydos, Upper Egypt. Also found on tablets buried for five thousand years.

Painted on silk and hung in Temple of Buddha, Japan, six hundred years ago.

Woven in fabrics found in Swiss Lake dwellings of Neolithic man. Cut in old Devonshire stones. The sacred sign among British Druids. Shaven upon heads of Nilotic warriors today.

Exhumed from burial mounds from within the limits of the United States.

Conspicuous on the tombs of the Incas of Peru. Commonly found on ancient buildings in Yucatan and Central America.

The Mantle of the Prophet

by Romaine H Lowdermilk

Author of "The Single Stah," "Same Old Vic," etc.

THE cook's alarm-clock sounded harsh tocsin an hour before sunset. Things had come to such a pass that supper was breakfast at the Emory ranch during the long dry spell. Jason Emory and his three cowboys dragged their canvases from place to place in the shade of the cottonwoods and slept intermittently through the hot Arizona days. At evening as the cook wrestled with his provender in the shade of the cook-shack Emory and the cowboys arose, defied the baking heat of the setting sun, and commenced their day's work.

The drouth had begun insidiously the previous Winter. Clouds had gathered time and again during that Winter and Spring only to fade into nothingness. Each week brought promise of relief—surely it would rain this time. But the rains had not materialized. Finally Jason Emory realized he must feed.

Now to feed the Emory cattle was no light undertaking. Days of hard riding would be required to round up the cattle scattered as they were for many miles over the broken range-land. But this was done. The steers and stronger cows were cut back on the range to get along as best they could on browse and what grass they would find in almost inaccessible nooks among the rocky peaks and unfrequented portions of the range.

The thin cows and the calves were taken to the ranch pastures—now but vast, parched enclosures, cañoned, brush-dotted and rough. Feed must be brought to them there. Of hay Emory had a little—a few hundred tons—barely enough to get things going well. So he set three motor trucks plying on the road between the ranch and the railway, forty miles north. At six or seven every evening the laden trucks, two of baled hay and one of cotton-seed, arrived at the ranch. From then until dark Emory and the cowboys were busy scattering feed.

If the drouth and the heat and the feeding had been all it wouldn't have been so bad.

But there was General Ruis Sanchez.

General Sanchez was in command of a promiscuous troop of Mexican rebels just across the border, twelve miles to the south. His *soldados* were fully as hungry as Emory's cattle, but no big truck-loads of feed were being hauled to the Sanchez cohorts.

On the contrary, they were obliged to forage for what they got and fight among themselves over even that little. A ragged, straw-hatted, shoeless mob was General Ruis Sanchez's outfit, so absolutely impoverished that even the dogs and women camp-followers had about abandoned them.

As for Sanchez himself, and his staff, they rode about on sleek horses, or in a high-powered motor car. The general headquarters was comfortably in town. The troops were encamped anywhere.

General Sanchez was a revolutionist. He craved liberty and emancipation for—for everybody! But he believed in letting the proletariat do the soldiering. A burly man, the general, gross, vain and overbearing.

He affected the garb of the mounted *rurales*—the tight trousers, like long leggings with flaring bottoms, the short, ornamented jacket, the collarless shirt of every known color, and the gay cloth scarf used as a belt. To this he added the finest *serape* that could be made, a *serape* the like of which had never before been seen in Mexico; a thing of silk and gleaming brocade, an ensemble of exquisite materials and coloring, edged with gold and tasseled with silver conelets. That he had taken it from a wealthy Chinese whom he had murdered with his own hands only added to its charm in the sight of Ruis Sanchez.

This *serape* he always wore picturesquely thrown over his shoulder, carelessly, gracefully, yet in such a way as to leave his right arm free to enforce his commands with the American automatic pistol that sagged at his hip.

But his chief pride was in his hat. Not content with the bizarre *serape* he seemed to try to outdo it with a sombrero of magnificent proportions, bound with a rich band at the crown and another about the brim, with the remaining portions embroidered and overlaid with gold and silver cord until it was a head-piece of considerable weight and conspicuousness. Sanchez's heavy, black hair, four or five inches long, hung down in "bangs" below his hat. With the hat off he lost nine-tenths of his impressiveness and became but a squat, blanketed peon, swart and evil looking.

That Sanchez was a man without education and lacked the natural intelligence so necessary to the leader of a revolution was apparent in the fact he made no effort to feed his men. They foraged for themselves and he only sneered at them as their eyes followed hungrily after the sleek horses upon which, with his staff, he reviewed their straggling lines.

When the news finally got to Sanchez's stomachless army that cattle were being fed at the Emory ranch it was only natural that there would be a general exodus in that direction. Who wouldn't risk a bullet for a nice veal—or a hunk of lean cow? Who wouldn't?

So they went in bands, men and boys, gaunt, hungry, their high straw-hats, frayed and full of holes, bobbing in the twilight; their tight trousers mere collections of rents and helter-skelter patches. Flat leather sandals, tied to the ankle by a single thong between the big toe showed feet cracked, sun-blackened and tough as horn, unwashed save by infrequent rains. Such a horde stole across the line to the Emory ranch.

That cattle were missing became apparent to Emory and his men in a very few days. Not by any sign of blood or offal. Leave it to the hungry revolutionists to make a clean sweep. They knew the cunning of the American cowboy in tracking and reading sign, and they weren't walking twelve miles for nothing. So when they took a beef they took it all. Many a little procession—four staggering figures, each with a quarter of beef on their backs, followed by another with the lungs, liver and intestines and still another with the paunch and hide—wended its way through the night back to the Santchez encampment.

But a brief daylight ride by the Americans disclosed all too plainly where the cattle had gone. Emory and his men found plentiful evidence of the midnight raids of Sanchez's men. So with prospects of a battle with the raiders Emory loaded his wife and the children, together with most of the ranch-house furnishings, on the trucks and sent them along to town. Then he and his cowboys added night-herding to their duties and took to sleeping days.

So with the cook and truck drivers guarding the ranch buildings at night and Emory and his three cowboys riding about the pasture, General Sanchez's army was obliged to cease its raiding.

This worried Sanchez mildly. His men had been getting plenty to eat until that gringo, Emory, put out his guard, and it piqued the general's pride to think his commissariat had thus been trifled with. Besides, his men had been easier to handle while they were being fed.

So he planned a huge raid. A triumphant reprisal. A showing-off of how much smarter he was than any other insurrecto leader who had raided the American side. He would annihilate that little pack of gringoes at the Emory rancho and if *las tropas Americanas*, who were supposed to guard the border, happened to interfere—well, he would annihilate them also. He would drive down enough cattle to feed his army through the coming Winter. That they were lean cattle didn't make any difference. Meat is meat, and bones make soup.

But General Ruis Sanchez reckoned without El Professor. For that very night had El Professor escaped from the adobe guard-house.

* * *

THEY saw him coming—the Emory crowd—from the tops of the loaded trucks as, chugging about the uneven feed-grounds, they were carrying on the usual evening feeding.

"Who's that?"

Jason Emory, ever vigilant, had been the first to see the approaching figure.

"Hum," grunted Billy Mills, straightening up and mopping his streaming face with half a flour sack he carried instead of a handkerchief. "Hum-m-m. Whoever he is, he's a long ways from anywheres, ain't he?"

The cotton-seed truck rolled alongside. Hez Fane flung down his scoop.

"Mebby hit's a bootlegger," he suggested eagerly. "Mebby he's got a whole autofull hid down the road."

Hez sucked his tongue and peered expectantly across the brown plain to where the stranger was making his way through the brush.

"Looks like a Mex," commented Emory dubiously.

"Lame, too," furnished Mills.

The stranger drew nearer. They could make out his face, thin and frail—like a girl's. His eyes looked out hungrily from their dark depths behind the black hair that hung about his face, unevenly trimmed where some one had hacked it off with a knife. A wispy mustache straggled from his lip. His tight trousers hung, a patchwork of odds and ends about his meager shanks while over his stooped shoulders he clutched a faded piece of carpet. On his feet were the one-string sandals. His face and legs showed clean and his tattered garments had evidently gone through repeated washings.

"Hongry," he stated obviously, as he neared the trucks.

"I'm thirsty," offered Hez, suggestively.

"You from that Sanchez army?" demanded Emory coldly.

"No, no—" the little stranger fairly vibrated denial— "No! Thees Sanchez—he ees no *bueno*. No good, thees Sanchez. Bah!"

"You seem to know him," commented Emory. "Where'd you come from?"

"From Parrena, I."

"Parrena! Well, that's where Sanchez is."

"*Si, señor.* Me, I wass wan prison-or," replied the refugee, sagging on his hip tiredly. "Ex-scape, I."

"No!" wailed Hez despairingly, hope gone.

None coming from that army could have liquor upon him—especially an ex-prisoner.

"Escaped, eh?" Emory eyed the Mexican doubtfully. "What's your idea in coming this direction?"

"Hongry," repeated the little man with an appealing smile.

"Bet he's a spy," suggested "Shotgun" Allen, the third of Emory's efficient trio. He was dubbed "Shotgun" because he seldom opened his mouth except to suggest violence. "Le's drive 'im back acrost th' line. Le's!"

"No, no!" protested the little Mexican. "Wan goo-d man, I. Ver-ry educate. Wass *maestro*—professor. School teach, I. Wan *cientifico, sabe?*"

"Well, we don't need any scientific school teachers around here," returned Emory not unkindly. "You just keep on moving, professor. We got all the crow-bait we can feed here already."

"Pe-lease," pleaded the professor. "Work, I."

He pounced upon an opened bale of hay and desperately tore off the wires.

"See, work for you," he begged, scattering the hay among the cattle. "Thees place, plenty for eat here. Pe-leas."

"Nope," grumbled Emory, "you don't stay here. You get!"

"Oh, no, no. Pe-leas."

The little man's voice took on the whine of the sellers in the market-place.

"Make come wan—beeg rain, I," he offered. "*Sabe?* Wan beeg r-r-rain. I make."

"Rain? How's that? You make rain?"

"*Si. Si-i-i, señor.*"

The ragged man straightened proudly.

"Make wan be-eeg r-r-rain! Ver-ry scientifico, I. You *quiere?*"

Emory gazed solemnly from one to the other of his men.

"Ask 'im if he c'n make *mescal*," hinted Hez.

"How quick can you cook up one of your rains?" Emory asked.

The professor tried hard to understand, but shook his head sadly.

"No *sabe*," he said apologetically.

"When can you make rain?" repeated Emory slowly. "*Muy pronto?*"

"Oh," the professor nodded positive assurance. "Wan leet-l day more."

Jason Emory glanced up at the sky.

"Clouding up now," he observed.

"Clouds up every afternoon; guess it's fixing to rain anyhow. We're sure due to get one soon."

Turning to the professor, he laughed.

"I reckon, professor, you're just a good weather prophet and think your rain-making will come out even with a natural storm."

The little Mexican twisted his carpet about him determinedly.

"I no spik so much the Englis," he explained anxiously. "*Pero* wan leet-l cup calcium chlorid—eet ees ver-ry dry, *lo mismo* dust, *sabe?* Wan leet-l mist in air—fog, *sabe*, make eet all so ver-ry wet, quick, *sabe?* To send thees leet-l cup ver-ry dry *polvoro* up into thees cloud—Ah!"

The carpet promptly slid to the ground as the little man drew himself up on his tiptoes and flung his arms wide out.

"Ah," he breathed ecstatically, his ribby torso gleaming, innocent of covering, in the fading sunlight, "eet r-r-rain! Thees dry sal grow wet ver' queek, up in the cloud. Absorp', *sabe*—deliquesce. Eet must fall. Thees few drop water make cool the cloud in wan leet-l spot and a few more drop fall. Thees drop make cool more cloud and more drop, he fall, too. Leet-l time more—*mucho agua*, plenty water."

He patted his lean chest proudly.

"*Si*, make r-rain, I."

Emory turned to his helpers. "What you boys think about it?"

"Let 'im take a whack at it," urged Hez. "Anything to make somethin' to drink."

"Sure," seconded Mills, "git 'im a can of that there dry dust an' let 'im fly at hit. Won't hurt nothin'. Hit'll rain anyhow when hit gits around to 't."

"Tell 'im ef he falls down on th' job he'll wish he's back in Sanchez's prison," counseled Shotgun Allen.

"Can you make rain with a ball and chain on your leg?" Emory addressed the professor. "*Con un' cadena aqui?*"

Seeing the professor had not comprehended he illustrated the principle he was trying to make clear.

"*Un' cadena*, chain on your *pierna*, leg down around your ankle *aqui*, here. Get me?"

"*Si*," replied the little man simply. "Yes."

"All right, we'll have a good rain. Take him to the cook-shack, Shotgun," ordered Emory, briskly. "And fill him up. Mills and me'll finish the feeding. Watch him close, we'll chain him up before we go on watch tonight. I ain't taking any chances on a Sanchez spy!"

El Professor received a full feed at the cook-shack. As a result the menu was a trifle short when Emory and his men, the feeding done, came in for their "breakfast." After the meal, while they prepared a suitable chain for the leg of El Professor, Emory plied the little Mexican with questions. Owing to the professor's volubility and his evident desire to give a frank account of himself, they were supplied with a most complete autobiography.

EL PROFESSOR'S story was simple. He was now forty-one. For twenty years he had been teaching school. As a youth he had been run down on the cobbled streets of Chihuahua by a pulque besotted muleteer, and his leg, crudely set by a native physician—whose sole claim to the title came from having spent seven months in California, America, as a house servant in the family of a noted medico—thereafter was shorter and slower than its mate. Mainly by his own efforts, but later aided by an aged woman of wealth who took an interest in his progress, El Professor had managed to acquire an education, specializing in science and chemistry. He had become a *maestro*, a teacher, in a little *escuela para niños*, later becoming a professor of chemistry in the university in Mexico City. There he had married.

With the outbreak of the revolution El Professor, feeling it right the Mexican people should shake off the yoke of the Iron Hand, fraught as it was with bad management and inconceivable turpitude meted out by those who held the reins of the administration, allied himself with the revolutionary movement.

But complications arose. Among the revolutionists rose up rival leaders. Some were without intelligence or valid claim to leadership. Of such was Ruis Sanchez. A bandit he had been, a bestial man, many times a murderer and who only craved the leadership for personal gain. But the easily misled peons had flocked to the bandit's standard. Why, none knew. Of a truth he would never do anything for their benefit.

Now, there was one, General Cordova, an honorable man, already high in the esteem of all proper revolutionists whom El Professor felt capable of guiding the people on to complete emancipation. So he gave up his school and went about speaking here and there in an attempt to stem the tide flowing toward Sanchez and bring it about to the efficient leadership of General Cordova.

El Professor was speaking to a gathering of peons in the very room in which he had taught his first school when the heavy, barn-like door was thrust rudely open and a band of armed soldiers shouldered into the cobbled corridor.

The door of his room opening off the corridor was pulled from its ancient hinges and his gathering dispersed while he himself was roughly marched to the market-place of the town where General Ruis Sanchez sat holding court-martial. Here El Professor was charged with being the intellectual head of sporadic revolts against Sanchez as leader of the revolutionists.

"You have heard the charge," sneered Sanchez, acting as chief inquisitor. "Have you anything to say before sentence is passed?"

"Only this—" El Professor, trembling, knowing the mercilessness of the general, determined yet to speak once more against this peril to the revolutionary cause—"Only this. You, Gen. Ruis Sanchez, are not capable of leading the Mexican people to their ultimate emancipation. Cease striving for personal aggrandizement and lend yourself to Cordova, the real leader. You are a fighter, but not a leader. Be content to yield leadership for the good of Mexico."

"Enough!" roared Sanchez, infuriated that the little man should throw such a suggestion in his face in the presence of the crowds assembled in the market-place to witness the affair. "Death! Death is the penalty!"

"*Ai,*" screamed El Professor as the guard dragged him away. "*Ai-i-i!* Bereft of your sombrero and *serape* you are but a peon like the rest of us. Take them off and see if you have a follower left to you by morning."

"Hold."

Sanchez stood up at his table.

"We will see."

At Sanchez's command they bound El Professor to a tree. Removing his wonderful hat, Sanchez laid it dramatically aside. Then, rolling his *serape* into a sort of long tube, he beat upon the shrinking form of the professor. Each blow jarred the little man like a stroke from a sand-bag. The silver conelets left countless tiny welts.

"Now," panted Sanchez, replacing his hat upon his head and throwing the tinkling *serape* about his shoulders. "Now, have I not still my followers? Have any left me to go to that Cordova?"

He glared about the circle of armed guards and leered insolently through the awe-stricken crowd daring any to question his authority.

"Speak, dead one," he slapped the professor full in the face. "Are there any here who are not for me?"

"I am not for you," replied El Professor, simply. "For the good of Mexico the leadership should be in the hands of Cordova."

"*Madre de Dios*, what impudence!" raged Sanchez. "You shall be beaten every day. Beaten with a folded *serape* every day until you acknowledge my leadership or death relieves you."

So El Professor had been thrown into the adobe hut that did duty as guard-house. On the morrow he was taken out and beaten with a folded *serape* in the presence of the general.

"Am I the leader?" demanded Sanchez when the beating was done.

"For the good of Mexico, no!" replied El Professor.

"Tomorrow you will change your mind," Sanchez threatened, and ordered him returned to the prison.

This occurred daily as, raiding, recruiting and occasionally skirmishing with the Federal forces, Sanchez's army moved slowly from town to town northward. For a time the general attended the beatings but soon the novelty wore away and he intrusted that duty to an aid. Soon the aid tired of the task and left it to the guard. Now beating a man with a folded *serape* is work, and a Mexican, especially one in an army, doesn't take to work. So it was not long before the beatings consisted of a few perfunctory thwacks. Even these dwindled until the guard forgot to administer them at all. Only the questioning remained.

"Do you acknowledge General Ruis Sanchez as your leader?"

"For the good of Mexico, no!"

So it went on. El Professor was kept in

the guard-house whenever they happened to be near a town, or shackled to a guard when they camped along the highway. He would have been freed long ago had it not been that none knew when General Sanchez might remember his political prisoner and demand he be produced. So the guard stoically put up with the inconvenience and kept El Professor in custody.

The marks of the beatings wore away and the irksome round as prisoner was livened by many an opportunity to whisper a word against the leadership of Sanchez and he converted many a guard and peon to the verge of open rebellion. As the weeks passed and the rations grew shorter he found it increasingly easy to find converts.

Already the majority of the horde were dissatisfied with the Sanchez rule and eager to go over to Cordova. Zealously El Professor held before them the advantages of the Cordova leadership. He even admitted that he himself would, if approached and offered the leadership of the movement, deliver the army safely into the beneficent arms of the Cordova régime.

But his activities reached the ears of General Sanchez. Accordingly he was haled once again before court-martial and sentenced to death. The execution was to take place the following morning as soon after sunrise as the guard could get around to it. El Professor was thrown into an adobe hut that constituted the guard-house, and a special guard, chosen by Sanchez himself, placed before the door. But El Professor's friends had been very crafty.

They had foreseen the death sentence and the special guard; so, in the absence of anything better, had placed a huge *olla* of water in a dark corner of the hut. There, as the night wore on, El Professor dipped his hands in the great vase and sopped the water against the mud wall, scraping away the soaked adobe with his fingers. It required three hours to soak a hole through the rear wall.

Once without the prison, acting on whispered advice of Cordova converts, El Professor left for the Emory ranch on the American side hoping to find refuge there until safe to make his way back into Mexico and confer with the Cordova leaders who were just now starting northward from Hidalgo.

Encountering an unenthusiastic reception at the Emory ranch, he had been driven to bargaining, and had agreed to furnish one good rain in return for food and lodging. Ever an honorable man, El Professor set about to deliver—if possible—the goods. This he felt was going to be difficult if not altogether defamatory.

He had long cherished a theory that rain could be produced by an enforced condensation of the clouds through introduction of some highly hygroscopic matter which would liquefy spontaneously in the air. He had chosen calcium chlorid as one of the most deliquescent salts. And now he was assured of an opportunity to try out his theory.

Accordingly the following day Emory's town-bound trucks bore an order to be telegraphed to the city for a drum of calcium chlorid and two kegs of black powder. The remainder of his rain-making equipment El Professor stated could be manufactured at the ranch. While awaiting the arrival of his salts and explosives El Professor mobilized a twelve-foot length of six-inch iron pipe, a drive-cap and all the wire on the place not actually in the fences. Smooth wire he preferred but barbed and baling-wire were grist for El Professor's rain-making cannon. The drive-cap he screwed down on one end of the pipe. This was the breech.

He drilled a hole about eight inches from the butt for the fuse and stuck a greased bolt in it to keep it clear as the wire was laid on. With extreme care he wound fully eight layers of wire about the long pipe, then went back and wrapped a few more about the breech for luck. After which he poured molten lead and babbit among the strands, practically coating the whole.

Emory and his cowboys, at the professor's request, hauled the great tube to the summit of Malapai Peak that speared the sky a mile or so along the river south of the ranch. There they lodged it, upended, in a crevice among the huge lava rocks. Its lower end rested on the solid, virgin formation of the mountain and its muzzle cocked up almost perpendicularly. There was little need for accuracy as the whole heavens were to be the target and a missile projected from that towering muzzle must go upward.

As Emory and his men set the huge piece in place their faith in the thing grew strangely. For it was only too apparent that the clouds that gathered each afternoon lay but a few hundreds of feet above the top of Malapai Peak. The clouds were of the usual

Summer-storm type: Great billowing thunderheads, dazzling white in the sunlight, with gray bottoms. Possibly the wild scheme of El Professor had some merit to it after all.

With the arrival of the powder and chemical the cowmen again ascended the peak. In addition they hauled a dozen flanged cans—loosely riveted sheet-iron containers like short pieces of stove-pipe of a size to slip easily into the bore of the cannon. These were to contain the deliquescent salt and were to be induced to soar, without wabbling, by means of a stick flanged and attached like the stem of a rocket. In this case, however, the stem preceded the can as it left the muzzle. A few sticks of real dynamite, fuse and caps were brought to go aloft, a half stick at a time, in the projectile with a view to exploding the container amid the clouds.

"Well, prof.," Emory said, with the outfit finally unpacked on the peak, "here's your layout. Load her up and take a whang at the clouds."

"Leet-l time more," objected El Professor. "*Poco tiempo.*"

"Purty soon!" expostulated Mills. "Come on, I wanta see th' fire-works. Turn 'er loose now, why don't y'u?"

"Yeh," seconded Hez, "pour about a foot of powder down 'er, ram home a wad an' drap in a can of dope. Le's have some rain right now. I'm dry, anyhow."

"Sure," urged Shotgun Allen. "None of this here *mañana* business goes. Shoot! Er we'll pitch yuh off th' peak."

"Leet-l time more," defended El Professor patiently. "Ees too hot now. Tonight ees more cool—*bueno. Esta noche.*"

"You won't be here tonight," stated Emory. "If you can't shoot rain out of those big thunderheads up there right now you can't ever do it. Me'n the boys'll be too busy keeping watch on those cows to escort you up here on any night sky-rocketing. Going to shoot now, or aren't you?"

"Ees too hot, *señor*," protested El Professor. "Tonight, he ees more better, *señor.*"

"Take him back down, Shotgun," Emory sighed.

"Le's stake 'im out right here on the peak?" suggested Shotgun.

"Might take a notion to load a rock in her and drop it on the ranch," objected Emory. "We'd better take him down till some time we can come along. Might rain of its own accord anyhow."

El Professor lifted his shoulders resignedly.

FOR two days and nights the long gun lay idle. In the opinion of El Professor the days were too hot for a successful onslaught against the clouds and in the opinion of Jason Emory the nights were too dark to permit of leaving guard duty to escort the professor to the peak. So the big tube stood on Malapai Peak in readiness and time passed, and the big clouds steadily refused to unleash their life-giving stream. The water-holes on the range were beginning to dry and the cattle moved about bawling restlessly at the strange turn things were taking.

Then, on the first night of the new moon—the darkest night of them all—came General Ruis Sanchez and his picked troop. Strategically the party divided into bands, detoured and stole upon the guards from every direction. So silently was the advance accomplished that Emory and his cowboys were caught, each at different sides of the pasture, with only the warning their horses gave. In the darkness it might be only a coyote or bob-cat, yet they each went down shooting.

Shooting and fighting, they had been slugged from their horses and disarmed by a smother of men accustomed to such work. Bound and tied in their saddles the cowmen were brought together as the raiding *insurrectos* combined for an attack upon the ranch buildings.

The cook, backed up by the three truck drivers, opened up a welter of firing that promptly drove the raiders to the brush. This was a needless waste of lives; besides, the burning buildings might attract the attention of the American troops guarding the border at—who knew where? It was beef they were after and the cattle must needs be started at once. Here were the four cowmen to be held for ransom—they would be worth a pretty penny. So why risk attracting the American soldiers who might break up the party?

The firing from the ranch-house had ceased and only the whoops of the soldiers as they rounded up the pasture and started the cattle moving south were heard.

Hez Fane leaned in his saddle to Emory.

"When we was chargin' th' house," he

whispered, "they took me right past where we chain El Professor—out back of the cook-shack—an' he's gone! Yessir, chain's a-layin' thar an' th' professor's went! Now what yuh think about thet?"

"He's in on this," replied Emory grimly.

"Spy?"

"Sure. The *amigos* turned him loose."

The order came to move on. Their horses were wheeled toward the south, a peon on foot leading each. A portion of the south fence had been thrown down and the cattle, tamed by the weeks of feeding, ambled patiently along ahead of the raiding troops. General Sanchez and his staff, mounted, acted as chief escort to the cattle.

The general had apparently once been a *vaquero* from the reckless way in which he charged back and forth behind the cattle, urging them on with quirt and spur and occasionally wheeling alongside his captives to hurl some epithet or word of derision. They would bring a good ransom, and he loved to gloat over his triumph.

"Where'd y'u reckon they're takin' us to?" queried Mills in a low voice after Sanchez had moved on.

"Likely take us down into Mexico an hide us in a hole somewheres an' forgit where they hid us," prophesied Shotgun gloomily.

"Oh, they'll hold us for ransom," explained Emory.

"Like t' know who'd ransom me," sniffed Mills.

"Reckon there'll be any hooch where they're takin' us?" Hez inquired speculatively.

Bam!

A mighty report shook the hills. An orange-colored glare appeared in the sky in front of them—flashed out, exploded and faded like weird lightning. The peons were having trouble holding the horses of the Americans. The cattle, too, were frightened and the leaders were milling. The mounted Mexicans strove to get them moving, and the troops on foot, though badly frightened, did what they could with stones and sticks to assist.

The night was pitch-dark and the heavy clouds that hung in the still air hid even the starlight. A confused yelling, a shouting of commands and the rattle of hoofs on the boulders of the dry river-bed came, a clamorous bedlam to the ears of the Americans.

"Hope there's a stampede," muttered Emory.

Another yellow flash cut the darkness over Malapai Peak. *Floo-mph!* came the roar of a heavy charge. The strange glare illumined the sky as the projectile exploded behind the clouds. Silhouetted against the yellow flare was a huge cannon on the mountain top. A shower of sharp particles whizzed down among the men and stung the cattle into a lumbering stampede back toward the ranch.

"*Madre de Dios!*" It was the voice of Sanchez. "*Artilleria, artilleria! El ejercito Americano!*"

"*Ai-i!*" the cry was taken up all about. "*Cuidado! Las troopas Americanas. Las troopas!*"

The soldiers leading the cowmen's horses released their charges and fled with the others.

"*El ejercito de America! Las troopas!*"

"Whoa, pony," Mills spoke soothingly to his horse. "Just wait till I get my reins in my teeth— Now then—I'm fixed."

"Here, back up to me, ol'-timer," Hez spoke to Mills. "Lemme untie yore hands; then yuh c'n untie th' rest of us."

"Bite down on yer reins, everybody—look out!"

The glare had again appeared over Malapai Peak. Almost instantly came the mighty report.

Bla-a-am!

The yells of the panic-stricken raiders came faintly back to the cowmen.

A clatter of shod hoofs came plunging up from the ranch.

"Hey," yelled Hez. "Come this way. "That's yuh, ain't it, cook?"

"Sure, an' a passel o' choffers," came the reply. "Why ain't yu' flyin' on with the rest of the Mexicans?"

"Untie us. We gotta gather these poor ol' heifers an' put 'em back in th' pasture."

Whamm! came from the peak.

"Feel here, Emory," Mills spoke presently. "Found it stuck in my leg. It's one of them bullets—a staple, fence staple!"

"Reckon El Professor lugged a charge of staples to load in that cannon?"

"Must've. Feel this'n. It come down outa the air."

As Emory's outstretched hand met with Mills' a drop of water hurtled down and struck in his palm. Then another—Another!

"Je-hos-o-phat!" ejaculated Emory reverently. "Boys, you untied? Well, then, let's get around these cows and hustle them back into the pasture. It's raining!"

Pfloo-mph! thundered from Malapai Peak and all the hills echoed back:

Phl-o-o-omph! Phl-o-o-o-m-mph!

Before the cattle were herded back and the fence hastily straightened the riders were drenched. Water poured from their hat brims and sloshed in their boots. Already tiny streams whispered along the parched earth and a murmuring finger of water nosed its way along the ancient watercourse. As they waded to shelter Emory picked up the chain that had linked El Professor to the tree. A key, deftly fashioned of babbit metal, hung in the heavy padlock.

"I'll bet he made that key the first day," murmured Emory admiringly.

The hills glistened in the morning sunlight. Far to the south from the low hanging boughs of a mesquite in the cañon a gaily colored *serape* swayed gently in the warm breeze. Its silver conelets dripped anon in the yellow flood that surged among the boulders of the river-bed beneath.

The bushes on the bank, scattering glittering drops, parted and the slight but radiant figure of El Professor limped into view. His trousers were but a helter-skelter patchwork and about his shoulders he still clutched his faded carpet—but upon his head— Ah!— There was splendor. The rain of the night had not dimmed the glory of that sombrero, banded and corded as it was with silver and gold.

Cautiously El Professor, under the wonderful hat, picked his way over the boulders to the mesquite. Carefully, reverently he plucked the tinkling *serape* from the branch and, letting the piece of carpet slip off into the river, he swaggered the wondrous *serape* about his bare shoulders.

Facing southward he hurried onward. Now was the opportune time to swing Sanchez's demoralized, dissatisfied forces over to Cordova, the genuine. El Professor straightened. The light of victory was in his eyes, the light of triumph—of realization.

Three months later General Cordova was elected President of the Mexican republic. The first appointment was that of El Professor, as *secretario de gubernacion.* All was well in Mexico.

The Beach of Friendship

by Kenneth Howell & Philip F Tusting

CLAD in white duck trousers and blue cotton shirts, the garments washed threadbare, Tom Ford and Bleak Evans sat in the stern of a rowboat, making slow passage across the harbor of Montevideo. The sun, swiftly dropping from the western sky, lighted the harbor in a final flare of gold. The roadstead gave its usual appearance of marine activity.

Against the orange sky, towering masts of schooners, brigs and barks stood out in a delicate maze of black tracery, while lower, flung across the background of the city, the multi-colored funnels and hulls of ships of all nations, gave base to the slender linework above. Booming out over the still waters rolled the strains of a Uruguayan naval band—Colors! It ceased abruptly in a final crash of drums. The heavy vibration of a cannon marked the close of the official day.

From time to time, during the unbroken silence, Tom had stolen shamed, sullen glances, at the face of the partner he had come to love and trust, in the course of their tempestuous career together. For ten years, never separated, adventuring, roving, the two young Americans had worked and gambled, and saved part of their pay, earned on a score of cargo vessels under a dozen flags.

Quarrels had been many, violent, swiftly forgotten, but their friendship was known in the haunts of seafaring men up and down the seaports of South America. Something now told Tom that this was no quarrel. He studied the bitter gray eyes of Bleak. The cold disillusioned eyes stared straight out of a face that was unbelievably beautiful. In many rough and tumble brawls, Tom was always rushed first—he had to stand off the brunt—for the tall, lean Bleak with his face of a Greek god never seemed as threatening as the powerful, heavily built Tom.

And here was one of the biggest strengths of the partnership, for Bleak was a devil when he fought. He was the more dangerous man and both youngsters knew it. His was a smoldering, coolly controlled strength. He never fought joyously, recklessly, as did the impulsive Ford. Only on rare occasions this smoldering fire burst into flame, and then a white flame it was, sweeping to destruction all that stood in its path. Ordinarily, he seemed wrapped in a reserve that only Ford could penetrate.

Now he spat suddenly over the side and spoke through tight lips.

"Now that you've spilled all you knew to Hardy, in that waterfront bar, we have little or no chance. He'll shove off, of course, in that coasting schooner of his, and run south to our island. The Island of Seals. Our discovery of fortune, yours and mine. The first big chance we ever struck. We save our money, pool it of course for the charter of a schooner, everything looks smooth as glass, and then you gotta get soused and give it away to this Captain Hardy."

The soft contour of his face was hidden now in a bleak, hard-bitten mask. He spoke again harshly:

"Did I say we had a little chance? No chance! Hardy laughed at me this morning on the water-front. I'm going to get him now, once I get on his deck. Tom, Tom, why did you——"

"Don't, Bleakie."

There was misery in the face of the gigantic Ford. He forced himself to look his partner straight in the eye.

"Just what are we going to do?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Bleak bluntly. "I want to have a last word with Hardy, although it is hopeless. Once he comes back with a catch of seals, he'll never get to the island again untrailed. There'll be a parade of sealers and —— government patrols."

He spoke sharply in Spanish to the boatman.

They steered silently up to the low side of a rakish, South Sea type schooner, riding gently at anchor behind the stone breakwater. The partners swung themselves over the rail and stood for a moment looking aft. The door of the after-house opened and they saw Captain Hardy advancing to meet them. He came smiling with four men close to his heels. Tom's relief at this friendly reception was plainly written on his face, but Bleak, the imaginative, the cautious, drew back to the rail; his eyes narrowed.

There is a certain tension and feeling akin to an electric current that is never quite absent in the sort of situation that Tom and Bleak had now to meet. It is this intangible power that breaks up *coups d' état* more often than the miscarriage of carefully laid plans. But as they afterward agreed, their lives were saved because Hardy had not dared allow any of his men to carry weapons. He was too shrewd, too strong a man to risk murder when a bad beating would serve his ends. And they were two to five. Hardy made a costly mistake—he counted Ford the more dangerous man. Four men were to handle him. But he himself was to take care of Evans, the slender graceful chap with the delicate features of a young god.

Bleak broke the tense inaction. He walked quietly up to Hardy as if to greet him and knocked him senseless with a swing that landed flush on the man's jaw. Tom had absolutely no comprehension of any reason for what he saw, but seeing Bleak strike was all he needed. He laughed shortly, lowered his head and charged, and right here, he showed his inferiority to Bleak's type of fighting. It was true that his charge carried two men under him—he was using fists, knees and head, but a third man kicked him hard in the shin of his left leg.

That will make any fighter slow up; will make nine out of ten quit. Ford didn't quit, but he gasped with agony and changed from a whirlwind offensive to a sullen defensive. Then some one struck him hard on the right temple and he dropped unconscious within a few feet of Hardy, who was still out.

With curses and snarls Hardy's gang of four, finding themselves opposed by Bleak only, leaped to close with him. But he wasn't in the center of their closing circle. The boy knew now that the fight of his life was on, and he grew cold with hate. It was the wolf fighting off the dog pack which sought to bring him down. Bleak, no longer a quiet man, but a rangy, mad wolf, fought brilliantly, savagely but cautiously. When he charged, he pulled up each time before he could be surrounded. He fought with every inch and ounce of his body toughened by three years of sea life. His wind was perfect, but he began to weaken slowly under the terrible punishment.

Tom suddenly came to his senses and for once used shrewd, cool judgment. Knowing that if he got to his feet and went in his weakness to help Bleak, he would be knocked senseless again, he waited and rested. Apparently unconscious, he watched his Bleakie begin to weaken and take more cruel punishment as his attack slowed up. Still he lay quiet and watched the boy he loved beaten to his knees, rise again and be beaten down. And while he waited strength flowed back to him. He knew it, could feel it, but it was not enough and he stayed down.

Bleak was blinded now by his own blood, he staggered but still fought on. Then at last from his raw split lips came a faint, "Come Tom;" and Tom *came*, came in his old style, and with Bleak out of it, half unconscious, Tom Ford tore into the four.

Two went down to stay, and then Tom laughed as one of the remaining men broke and ran. Now he was facing one man only, the big burly one who had finally crashed Bleak. This man was no quitter, but he was fighting a Tom Ford, whose thoughts were not of money or seals or a ship, but of his Bleakie, bleeding and battered. Just about ten seconds and the man was down with Tom on top worrying his throat, raging and out of control.

"That's enough Tom!" said Bleak weakly, and he had to edge over and reach Ford's shoulder before he would stop. "Fast now, lad, we've had a bit of satisfaction, but we can't stop Hardy. If this was at Seal Island—we'd take the ship, but——"

The impassive boatman rowed them ashore, his face averted, as though indifferent, disdainful of the open violence of the incomprehensible white men.

Tom and Bleak made their way at once to the Welcome Bar and after a careful cleaning, rubbing each other down, and rough massage, they drifted to a table in the rear of the bar. Norwegian beer was served in tall thin glasses, its rich yellow body topped by a creamy collar of froth. As their noses emerged, they looked at each other and grinned.

"We've been in a battle," said Tom.

"A war," said Bleak. "Tom, every minute counts now. I'm in bad shape. You go on down to the water-front and keep on scouting around for a schooner. I'll rest here."

Ford looked anxiously at his partner.

"Are you hurt, Bleakie?" he muttered.

"No. Drift now. *Vamos!*"

BLEAK EVANS watched the big adventurer lurch out at the wide door. He closed his eyes and a great weight of weariness descended upon him, smothering his courage, snuffing out like a candle the heat of his enthusiasm for the stern chase of Hardy, doubtless already heaving anchor in the roadstead. The physical and mental reaction to the punishing fight was overpowering him now. An idea that had simmered in his mind for days took definite burning shape. He would let Tom who had, through his loose tongue plunged him into all this trouble, take the bulk of their savings and go after Hardy. As for himself, he was through with the whole venture. He would rest here ashore for a month, amusing himself with the dancing girl Zelda, and then ship north.

He stirred in his chair, frowned blackly and opened his eyes. Then he faced the truth. The girl Zelda—that was it. There lay the raw truth. The shameful rotten truth. For this infatuating girl of the dance-halls, a companion of the past two weeks, he, Bleak Evans, was going to desert his partner—good old faithful Tom; hot-hearted, loyal Tom.

In that moment, Bleak Evans shuddered with loathing at the treacherous desertion he was going into, open-eyed. He saw now, clearly, that the idea had been in his mind ever since he had met Zelda. Zelda of the shining eyes, of the slender body, of the lilting voice. Perhaps, he thought now, the fight with Hardy on the schooner had been an unconscious attempt to find some sort of satisfaction to offset the vileness of running out on Tom.

And yet, as he sat in the Welcome Bar, his self-contempt, his utter loathing of his treachery, paled beside the infatuation that poured through his whole being for the dancing girl.

And so, when Tom, utterly tired out but with victory in his eyes, strode in from the street, Bleak sat silently watching him. Dully he heard his partner describe the schooner he had stumbled on through sheer good luck.

"Outfitted, Bleak, ready for sea, we can shove off tomorrow. I flashed the charter money on her spiggoty captain and he snapped it up. How's that for your old bunkie, eh?"

Tom seemed to sense suddenly that something was wrong. He sent a searching look toward the other.

"What's wrong with you?" he asked anxiously. "Maybe you *were* hurt in that scrap, after all. We'll see a doctor."

"No," said Bleak heavily, "I wasn't hurt."

"Well, then, what the —— is up? Here I go out, find a schooner, charter her on a blind lay and you sit there like a statue."

'Ford, I'm quitting. It's your deal now. I guess it's the end—a split-up."

A flood of red surged into the bronzed face of Tom Ford. His great fist rose and thundered down on the table. Then swiftly the color left his face. It became dead white.

"Bleakie, lad," he whispered, "I don't understand. It can't be true that you are knifing me. Me, your old fighting mate."

He broke off and reached out across the table, gripping fiercely the forearm of the other man.

"Is it that woman?" he muttered viciously and it seemed that he read the truth in the other's shifting gaze.

His grip relaxed; he was silent a long time, then got wearily to his feet.

"You and I have been through a lot together, Bleak," he said simply, "partners like us can't cut loose, that's all. If I get the seals, beating Hardy, escaping governments, you get your share."

"No, by ——!" snarled Bleak Evans. "As you say, I've knifed you, but I don't rob you afterward! I'll be away by the time you put in here again."

Both were on their feet now, facing each other across the table.

Tom extended his hand—

"Wish me luck, Bleak."

Bleak read the misery in the haggard countenance of the broken-hearted fellow. He stared steadily at Tom and shook his head.

"I wish you luck," he said, "a hold full of it, but I won't shake hands. I can't, that's all."

Late that night he looked for Zelda; was unable to find her at the Royal or the Casino. The next day in the early afternoon, he saw with a catch in his breath, a low, black-hulled schooner head out to sea. She heeled sharply in the freshening breeze, rising lightly to the ground-swell outside the breakwater. Slowly she came about and spread her canvas on the first leg of her southern course. And Bleak brushed a hand across his eyes. A vast wave of hopelessness, of desolation, broke over him—

"Good luck, boy," he whispered.

Then like a flame, warming, caressing, came the image of Zelda. She passed before his eyes, blotting out the schooner's sails, silvered against the cold blue of the sky. He must go to her now—to lights—to noise—to music—

He stepped in at the doors of a waterfront café.

"Whisky," he demanded and sat alone in somber silence, the tiny glass cradled in his hand. He left at last to go to Zelda.

Ten days passed.

BLEAK EVANS sat at his usual side table in the large room of the Golden Gate Café. One arm crooked over the edge of the table, body slumped back in the chair, head thrown forward, his chin almost resting upon his chest. Opposite him sat Zelda, leaning on her bosom across the table, her hand clutching at Bleak's arm, shaking it now and then as a terrier shakes a stick with a bit of cloth on it, her eyes searching his face and her soft, warm, purring voice with all the wile and persuasiveness of her French and Spanish blood, pouring sensuous love into his ears. But Bleak heard them not. Like a man entranced he stared with a cold fixed gaze down upon the floor at a spot just to the left of where Zelda sat.

At this particular moment Bleak, for the first time in his life, was subject to a bad conscience. His mind was constantly forcing him back over his break with Tom, bringing before his eyes pictures of his old friend in all manner of tragic positions, all due, Bleak told himself, to his desertion. A shipwreck with death to Tom; a fight with revenue agents, death to Tom; a battle on the shore of Seal Island, death to Tom. Always he saw death to Tom, from which he sought but found no relief.

It obsessed him and he became sullen and moody and Zelda fought hard to make him forget lest she lose him. She used all the methods that a girl of her type knew. Methods which had always proved sufficient heretofore, but Bleak's malady was one she did not understand. To be so true as that to a friend was beyond her conception, but she realized full well that to give in for one instant would be to send him off to sea for his mate. He stayed now because he was not yet strong enough to break loose from her power.

Her interest was entirely selfish. She fought her battle well with the weapons she had. Never crossing him, constantly making him feel that he needed her, that it was Zelda that gave him the joy in life he had, that it was Zelda that was ever thoughtful of his wants and wishes, that it was Zelda upon whom his life turned.

Love, the hot joy of life, the warm pulsing of passion, the fire in his blood, the vehemence of his desires were all born of Zelda and yet he was desperately dissatisfied with it all. He became conscious of Zelda's warm breath upon his cheek and the faraway sound of her words. He turned and looking at her tried to make sense of what she was saying. Her words were oddly mixed with the words of Tom Ford and in his mind all was restless chaos like a tossing sea. Then with an effort his mind cleared of the jumble and he heard her low voice distinct, annoyingly distinct.

"Bleak, Bleak listen to me!"

Then less insistently, but more persuasively—

"Come Bleakie, your Zelda wants you to go with her."

Bleak raised his head and looked across at the girl, an odd smile breaking the stern worn face. He wondered what devil in her had slyly made her lips call him "Bleakie," the old nickname used by his deserted partner. That had fetched him as nothing else could have, but he answered with no trace of enthusiasm or surprize—

"Where?"

Zelda flashed a smile of approval.

"Anywhere at all, Bleak, just so long as we get out of here. You need a change. Something to make you forget yourself for an evening."

Rising she took him by the hand and continued:

"Come, I have it, we'll blow ourselves to the movies. It'll be a real treat for both of us."

Stepping to his side she took hold of him under the arm and lifted him from the chair, and without speaking Bleak allowed himself to be led out of the door of the Golden Gate Café.

As they sat in the semi-darkness of the Palace Theater waiting for the show to begin Bleak was conscious of the girl by his side. Conscious of the arm tucked beneath his, the warm firm fingers interlocked with his fingers and the closeness and pressure of a soft, warm, pulsing body as she leaned toward him, her hair brushing against his face and giving off a sweet cloying scent that quieted his restlessness and tricked him into momentary forgetfulness of treachery to Tom.

The monotonous hum of the machine at the rear commenced and a white square of light was thrown upon the screen followed by the title of the picture, "Shipmates or Treasure Trove." Bleak stiffened in his seat. The words on the screen seared his brain and in their wake came the old haunting memories. Zelda was quick to sense the loss of the advantage she had gained but a moment before, and sought to hold him by pressing ever tighter to his side, her cheek now hot against his as she whispered love into his ear, nonsensical nothingness, caustic comments about moving pictures, anything to quiet his mind and capture his thoughts.

He slipped down in his seat and leaning toward her became quiet. She thought that she had won him again and chattered on, but Bleak neither heard her chatterings nor saw the picture in front of him. His mind was filled with the old associations; the old ships upon which he and Tom had shipped together; a contemplation of the depth of the apparently unbreakable friendship that had existed between them and had seen them stand through dangers together and then across it all stood out the cause of their separation, his unprovoked treachery.

He imagined the small bay on the west side of Seal Island. Beneath a mackerel sky pierced by a white moon, stood two black ships some fifty yards apart. No lights hung from their halyards. Apparently no life was aboard either, and the schooners swung loosely on their anchor-chains to the shifting of light winds. Coming broadside into the moonlight, he saw across the bow of the one the name *Gypsy Girl.* So real was the picture that Bleak trembled as he recognized the identity of Tom's boat. The other schooner showed no name, but the low black side of the rakish, South Sea type left no doubt as to the identity of Hardy's vessel.

A swishing sound rose from her shadowed side, the swish of rope running free over the wheel of a block, followed shortly by the expectant smack of a boat hitting the surface of the water. The sound of oars in their locks and the noise of a boat slipping across the surface of the sea preceded the appearance of five men rowing cautiously across the moonlit space between the two ships. They moved slowly but without detection to the far side of the *Gypsy Girl.* The sea was so quiet, the world so serene and even the wind seemed to take a lull at the moment as if holding its breath at this sign of treachery. The next instant Bleak was looking down into the half-lighted cabin of the *Gypsy Girl.*

Tom lay sleeping in his bunk. Elsewhere on the schooner Bleak knew that he would find four worthless beach-combers also sleeping and yet at that very moment he also knew that five men were coming stealthily up the schooner's side, possibly already over the rail and sneaking toward the cabin in which Tom lay sleeping. The result was inevitable. Hardy would have complete upper-hand before Tom could defend himself and all would be lost.

And then the thread of hallucination in Bleak's mind snapped and he was clearly conscious again of his surroundings, of Zelda, of the picture on the screen, particularly this latter— A deserted shore. In the foreground a deep hole in which he could see a half-uncovered chest of buried treasure. Against this background a running fight on the beach was taking place between the characters of the story. Three men were attacking a fourth who was dangerously in need of assistance from his partner who could be seen in the distance running up with a revolver in his hand. It was an answer to Bleak's fears and he turned clear eyed and determined to Zelda.

"It's all clear between Tom and me now, Zelda; I must be going. No blame to you, it's all been my fault, but there's no time to lose sitting still. Let's go out of here. I join Tom on the first ship I can get."

Zelda rose with him. She was too wise to attempt to hold him now. Her game was up, she realized it and accepted it with the philosophy of her kind. With a smile on her face she tucked her arm beneath Bleak's again and talked to him quietly as they walked up the street.

"You'll be needing some of your things along, Bleak. I'll run on over to the lodging-house and do them up for you while you're huntin' a ship. I turn here. See you later. Stop at the room and I'll be waiting for you. Good luck, big boy."

Bleak flashed her his warm now happy smile of gratitude and waved to Zelda as she disappeared around the corner.

It was no easy matter to pick up a schooner. For three days Bleak searched in vain and then coming into the Royal one evening he saw the man he had been seeking. Everybody in Montevideo knew the downhill career of Captain Ricarte. Drink had ruined many a good captain among the South American ports and left them derelicts with small schooners their only commands, picking up odd consignments to small neighboring coastal towns. No one trusted these men and when they could be located they were open for any sort of a venture in which they could get money enough to keep them supplied with liquor. Bleak found Ricarte sitting alone over his glass of Vino and drawing up a chair sat down beside him.

"Loadin' much of anything nowadays, captain?" questioned Bleak. A face with a network of red and blue lines running across its swollen features turned toward him.

"Nothin'. Not even enough to buy liquor with," and raising his glass to the light he added, "See that half glass, that's the end."

He placed the rim to his mouth and drained the dark liquid with a gulp. "No money, no drink; no drink——"

Bleak saw his opportunity. He had stumbled into luck and he lost no time in following it. Reaching over and taking Ricarte's arm in his grasp he held him to attention.

"Captain I want a vessel—right away, now, this minute—understand me?"

Ricarte, despite his drink-fogged brain, understood, for he answered—

"I've a schooner, Evans, but no money—no money, no drink——"

"Good," cut Bleak, "then we can get together on a little deal. You've no money but a schooner. I've no schooner but a scheme which, with your schooner, 'll mean money—plenty of money for both of us. It'll keep you in liquor the rest of your days. Is it a go? It's a short job. You'll be gambling on a sure thing, but speak quickly. There's no time to lose. Will you sit in the game with me, Ricarte, or are you afraid to risk your ship?"

"I'll sit in—for an advance."

Bleak drew out the last of his savings. He was glad now that he had not had to give Tom all.

"Ricarte, big stakes carry big risks. I'll give you all I have, but I'm stripped pretty low. It'll do you till I get back."

Bleak counted out his last two hundred and passed it across the table. Ricarte thumbed it over and put the bills away before pronouncing:

"Good, money, drink. By'mby plenty money, plenty drink. Make out the papers."

AS THE *El Mar* slid out through the harbor of Montevideo, Bleak's mind was at rest once more, and his body filled with renewed strength. No more uncertainty, no more wavering—a straight course now, and wouldn't Tom be surprized to see his old Bleakie with him again! As the days went by they ran into colder weather and rougher seas. The little schooner required the constant watch of all on board to keep her on her course. Built years ago, she was sluggish in heavy seas, and Bleak was afraid that at any moment her rotten old canvas might give way under the intense strain, but, miraculously enough, everything held, and with her heels to the wind they plowed their way steadily toward Seal Island.

For twenty-eight days Bleak Evans communed with himself as he watched the little schooner clip through the cold waters of the South Atlantic. No longer was he obsessed with fears for Tom. He knew Tom too well to believe that anything serious had actually happened to him. Temporarily held up by storm—yes; outmaneuvered by Hardy and his gang on the Island—yes, possibly, but put out of the fight, no! At any rate, before long, mused Bleak, Hardy would have the two of them to deal with—then let him look out and as he stood by the wheel watching the helmsman ease off from the wind he called recklessly in his exultation—

"*Hombre*, there at the wheel—hold her well into the wind."

And as he saw the wheel spin and felt the small schooner careen back into the wind he added:

"Righto now, keep her nose up to it. Don't ease off till you feel her slip."

And turning about, his face tilted toward a jet black sky he shouted with the song of the sea.

"Oh, Tom we're a ridin' toward you, we're a ridin' straight and fast. Stand fast—stand fast—stand fast."

And as the little vessel held her place in the wind, every rope taut, every inch of her canvas bulging, a smile of satisfaction came over his face—a face that had become boyish again.

It was early twilight when with use of a glass Bleak first caught sight of Seal Island. Following rapidly on sight of the island came sight of a low schooner lying in the bay on the near side. A schooner with sails furled and an anchor. Across the bow the name *Gypsy Girl* later became visible and Bleak knew that Tom's ship was at least safe and probably with Tom aboard, for the surrounding sea revealed no other ship anywhere. Bleak lost little time in speculation as to the whereabouts of Hardy. His interest was not in Hardy, nor in seals at the moment, but just good old Tom whom he had treacherously deserted and was now going to rejoin.

As darkness fell Bleak brought his ship to anchor at a spot about half a mile to the south of the *Gypsy Girl* and immediately hauled up his tender to be rowed across. Tom's boat showed no lights, but with her position taken beforehand, it was not long before he made out her dark shape ahead of him and ordered his men to ship oars. He had taken all four in the dory. This was no shore for separation. Silently they drifted up, and feeling along her side, Bleak's hand came in contact with her ladder rope, and he swung himself lightly over the rail.

He had come aboard near the stern. Ahead of him he discerned a light shining through a half-open companionway, and toward this he made his way. The rest of the ship was shrouded in darkness. Looking down through the narrow slit into the cabin, a strange sight met his eye. Sitting with his back against the far wall and facing the companionway, directly beneath which sat the crew of three, was his old partner, Tom Ford, with one arm done up in a sling, and the other resting on his leg with a revolver held in his hand. Bleak took in the scene and its significance at an instant's glance. Mutiny, he thought, and they nipped him before he could get the upper hand, the dogs! Bleak's heart beat to bursting with joy at the thought of rejoining his old shipmate, and with a roar of welcome, he shoved back the slide on the top of the companionway and jumped the heads below.

"Tom! Confound you! You blinkin', sweatin', old pirate. Don't look so stupid; I'm not a ghost."

"Bleakie," seemed to be all the other was able to manage.

The three sailors crouched in apparent amazement as though Bleak had dropped in from the sky.

"Oh, lord, but it's good to see you again. I thought I'd never reach you in time. It was too much for me, leaving you to face it alone, so I up and chartered Ricarte's old schooner and put out after you and here I am just in time I take it. She's laying about a half-mile south of you with a crew of four pretty good men." And jerking his head toward the sailors by the companionway he asked, "What's the matter Tom; mutiny on your ship?"

"Bleakie, no mutiny, but it's plain —— to me without you. My men have been loyal enough, but we're outnumbered by Hardy and his bunch and after making a working agreement to take seals he broke it and shot at me as I was returning to the schooner. Clipped me in the elbow. Oh, Bleak, you don't know how glad I am to see you."

"Well, Tom, let this crew of yours clear out for a bit and we'll talk things over and see how we stand. What d'you say?"

"All right boys. Let us alone for an hour or so and then we'll have some news for you that'll make up for all that's gone by."

The men rose and filed out of the companionway with lighter spirits than they had known for days. Bleak's coming had already had a moral effect upon them for the better and as the last man passed out he was whistling a low tune to himself.

Bleak was the first to speak when the two partners were left alone.

"Just a word first, Tom, and then I'm through and ready to listen to you. What's past is past, but I want you to know that I've felt the dirty dog I've been to you from the first day I told you I was going to stay behind on this expedition to the day I set out to follow you and that I'm here to make up for slippin' out on you. Zelda——"

Tom Ford reached out his uninjured hand impulsively to Bleak.

"Aw forget it, Bleakie, and shake on our reunion. What's the odds? We're both here now and let's put this thing through on Hardy and clear out with our seals before it's too late."

Bleak grasped the other's hand. "We're clear of that," he said simply.

"Now listen here, Bleakie, while I tell you what's what in these parts. When I first reached here, Hardy and his men were at work loadin' seals. I breezed in, and had a parley with him with the result that to avoid an open quarrel with me, he agreed to a truce. We were to mind our own business and there would be seals enough for both. Then, the other day, he tried to pick an open break with me. I side-stepped it until time for me to return to my schooner, when he opened fire on me from behind cover on shore.

"I was alone so jumped for my boat and pulled for all I was worth for this old ship, but he winged me before I could get aboard her. Since then, he has kept two men on the beach, and when we start for the shore, he opens fire. Result is, we're here, prisoners. His ship's on the other side of the island, where the seals are, in the cove. That's all."

Neither man moved to the bunks. They sat in a thoughtful silence for half an hour, and then Bleak said quietly—

"A flag of truce is a farce with Hardy. Your arm shows that." He suddenly brought his fist loudly down on the cabin table. "Wait——"

Rising, Bleak stepped swiftly through the companionway and Tom heard him whistle to one of the sailors. The fellow's footsteps sounded hollow on the deck and he heard the fellow answer, "Yes sir! Right sir, at once," and the steps hurried forward as Bleak reappeared in the cabin.

"That's done. Your man's going over and bring back my crew immediately. Here's the scheme—we're going ashore to-night, no waitin' for day, tonight, Tom, right away now. We outnumber Hardy and taking him by surprize with reenforcements this way it'll mean his jig is up and he'll be the first to realize it, you wait and see. I suppose there's no use my asking you whether you'll go ashore with me or not. I wish you'd stay back, but perhaps——"

Tom was grinning at him now.

"Let's go," he said, "we're shot with luck, having such a black night."

And yet, Tom was, Bleak thought, alarmingly feeble as later he clutched his arm getting over the side into the dory. The short row ashore was made in silence.

Bleak could see now the shifting colors of the sand as the tongues of the surf licked up on the beach, and spent, receded again, leaving the wet expanse glistening with light and shadows. The dory rode in on a cresting wave, slewed around broadside as the fold of water smashed in the shallows, and came to an insecure rest, its keel grating on the pebbles. The men held her against the seaward suck of the backwash, until a following wave helped drag her up beyond the tide-line.

Bleak heard Tom curse as the faintly luminous clouds were shredded into jagged streaks of silver by the cold rays of a young moon just breaking through. The beach was suddenly bright, painted in unrelieved white. And with the light came the whine of a bullet, high and wide. No orders were necessary. Bleak grinned in sardonic grimness as he crouched behind the side of the boat—every man was there with him.

An automatic roared out from somewhere up the beach, the crash rolling along behind the spitting flame from the barrel. A bit of planking splintered off from the bow of the dory. One of the French-West Indian mongrels muttered uncertainly; and then

Bleak answered with lead for the sake of sheer morale. There was nothing except direction to guide his aim. His big automatic blazed into action and his heart leaped madly as he was deafened by the echoing crash of his partner's gun. Tom was coming back. Bleak held his fire for a moment, curiously studying the other's face. It showed in the moonlight, colorless, malignant, almost feral in its savage hate as Tom aimed apparently at the flash of a distant rifle.

"That's luck," he grated as a yell of pain rang shrilly from Hardy's contingent.

A moment later, there was a lull in the firing, and the hoarse voice of Hardy boomed out a call for truce, which changed on the instant to a cry of rage as Tom shot back his answer from the smoking mouth of his gun.

As if some gigantic hand had drawn a heavy shade across the path of a lamp, the moon was blotted out and intense blackness shut down on the beach. A rifle barked from a different quarter. Bleak stared fixedly over the keel of the upturned boat. The dark was impenetrable, solid like black marble, he observed. To seaward, sky, ocean and shore were merged in one undivided shadow, a faint line of smoky surf alone painted on the somber canvas. The long night hours crept past, dismal, angry hours, marked off by desultory shooting, aimless but irritating and wearing to an extreme.

Tom Ford's wounded arm began to throb steadily, and his temper and nerves suffered in proportion. More than once he snapped viciously at Bleak, who smiled a bit anxiously to himself, answering gently. It was, Bleak figured, somewhere between two and four in the morning, when the darkness was split into stabbing flashes, spurting incessantly from the guns of Hardy and his men. Some few shots, in blind chance crashed into the heavy planking.

"We'll never launch this craft again," Bleak muttered. "She's a sieve."

Then in a wild bursting fusillade the firing ceased on both sides. Bleak thought he heard a muffled shriek as his crew fired at the points of flame up the beach. Then unbroken silence to match the veiled mystery of the night. Beyond the surf a fish leaped clear of the sea, invisible, dropping back into his element, with a sharp plash. There was nothing to do but wait for daybreak. And there was a feeling of uneasiness pervading all, at the thought of the approaching dawn which would mark the crisis of this wild feud.

THE black vault overhead turned gray. The ghost hours between night and morning dragged interminably, and then without warning, dawn revealed the entire length of the beach, the rocky rise in front of them and the motionless sea behind them. Motionless, all silver and rose, the setting for a yachting party of daintily clad women and men in the habiliments of amateur yachtsmen, captain and officers in gold stripes, crew in spotless cloth. The soft chime for an early breakfast might have drifted across the water, a low-voiced command or two directed at the seamen silently washing decks—and Bleak's dreamed thoughts were shattered by the rough hail that sounded down the beach. He grinned without mirth. No, this was no pleasure cruise. There was no wind, the air as still as the sea, nothing stirred except a gull swooping far off-shore.

Hardy's bellowed words for the moment swept every other sound clear of the beach.

"Oh, you Evans, this thing's a stand-off. Come over under a white rag. We gotta talk. What d'you say?"

"Answer him Bleak," Tom grated.

And Bleak's gun roared out. Apparently unperturbed, Hardy yelled again from behind his rocks.

"You come out under the guns o' my men, I'll come out under the guns o' yourn. We'll meet half-way—unarmed."

"Don't go," said Tom.

"Cover him," said Bleak, and cautiously an inch at a time he edged out from the shelter of the boat. Then as he saw Hardy crawl into the open, he walked slowly forward toward the other who advanced to meet him.

They stood eye to eye, studying, appraising. Hardy raised a hand to scratch his chin and Bleak leaped back to a crouching stand, his head low. Hardy laughed and spat on the sand.

"A bit nervous," he commented.

With the passing of the derision from his face, it became again the cold leathery mask of the crooked adventurer. His lips, straight lines across the heavy countenance, appeared black in the increasing glitter of the sun. They opened narrowly now.

"Look here, Mr. Evans. The sealin' game is up, for anything beyond this first trip." He waved an arm toward his men and the others, drawing cautiously near in armed curiosity. "Too many mouths to blab, y' see. Get back, you scum," he yelled. His men seemed sullen in their retreat, Bleak thought, as he ordered his own crew to drop back to the boat.

"No," Hardy went on, "it's a case of killin' seals, loadin' our holds and shovin' off. There's plenty for all. Under a truce," he concluded.

This time it was Bleak who laughed and spat on the sand.

"It's you and me, Hardy, you and me *alone*, here on the beach. Not two to five—this time—one to one— If you can kill seals after, well, go to it. You'll be welcome."

"The men," Hardy growled, "I don't fancy a bullet in the back as I fight."

"Tom," Bleak called out over his shoulder, "step out here *with* your men. They'll stack their arms along with Hardy's outfit. Come on, Hardy. Pass the word."

Queer guttural bursts of laughter, puzzled oaths, excited shrugging of shoulders accompanied the sheepish execution of the orders. The men came up singly, grinning, scowling, but for the greater part, in frank relief that their job was finished as far as shooting went. A rough laugh went up when the last man, an undersized black from Trinidad, regretfully cast a huge pair of brass knuckles on the stack of guns, knives and daggers on the sand.

Tom whistled softly.

"A sweet gentle crowd, eh Bleak? Hardy though. He's made to your order."

But as the sun climbed higher in the seaward sky the blood streaked sides and chest of Bleak's rapier-like body, told their story. The old speed, the pantherish instinctive avoidance of punishment was missing. His panted breaths were sobs as he charged in and out. And Hardy's face, a swollen crimson slab of flesh, mocked him as he fought. The bad beating he had taken before from Hardy and his crew, the loafing and drinking afterward, his worry over the treachery to Tom, Zelda, all came now here on this desolate beach, and stole from his strength, his fighting prowess, ranging themselves, silent allies at the side of Hardy.

The big man crashed a heavy blow to Bleak's mouth and there was a spatter of teeth on the shingle. Hardy charged and gave his first cry of pain when Bleak lashed out with his foot. The heavy shoe smashed through his lower guard to his stomach.

"*La Savotte,*" screamed a French negro from Martinique and Tom's fierce grip in the sand relaxed. Bleak had won a breathing spell, for Hardy was checked in mid-career, retching violently in illness. Bleak stumbled, lurched toward him for the knockout, but knew suddenly as he reeled, that he was too weak. Giddy streaks of light shot up before his eyes. Then a solid blackness. His eyes cleared and for a moment he was aware of a startling clarity of vision. He saw the sea growing restless under a flicking tongue of breeze, a bit of white beach, the up-turned boat, a cold circle of blue sky, and two pigmies beneath it, struggling to maim and beat and kill. His glance swept the savage onlookers. He was conscious of no surprize at shouted encouragement from Hardy's own crew. The man was a brute. Naturally his men would turn against him. Then the light lowered and he groped in clouded dimness once more.

Hardy, swaying on his feet, an unrecognizable hulk, was now close, now miles away, the eyes pin-points of vicious hate and fear, buried in red mounds of flesh. Then they met and for a moment, naked chest to naked chest, they clawed and struck and Hardy slashed once with his teeth. Their arms met round each other's back and hanging on, they tottered back and forth.

Into Bleak's pounding ears, came a thin reed-like voice, vaguely suggestive of Tom, but far off, a whisper.

"Back-heel him, Bleak! Oh, you Bleakie, back-heel, *back-heel*, BACK-HEEL!"

Twice he thrust his heel back of Hardy's. Twice the big man kicked free. Then again he set his foot behind the other, threw his arm across the body, thrusting forward.

He seemed to fall endlessly, slowly—into darkness——

He roused to a crooning voice. Tom was lifting him—pointing to something down the beach. A group of men, clumsily bearing off a grotesquely sprawling figure.

Bleak's head dropped back. Unutterable weariness, exhaustion, poured over him. As he drifted off to sleep, interwoven with Tom's voice, jubilant, anxious, was the sharp bark of seals across the island.

Another Pawn of Fate

by F. St. Mars

Author of "The Hungry World," "Sunwing," etc.

But a desert stretched and stricken, left and right, left and right,
Where the piled mirages thicken under white-hot light—
A skull beneath a sand-hill, and a viper coiled inside,
And a red wind out of Libya, roaring, "Run and hide!"
—"Jabson's Amen" (*Kipling*).

IF YOU had killed, and what was worse, barely otherwise made use of, three colts, a heifer, twenty-one sheep and eleven pigs belonging to other people, so that four hundred dollars would not even begin to cover your debts—if, moreover, you had done to death two valuable dogs sent to interview you upon the subject, and spoiled the sleep of not less than two dozen stockmen for an uncounted number of nights, you might have expected consideration—but you would certainly not get it.

All these things, and more, had the jaguar done, and he was beginning to reap his harvest. Things became hectic for him, and by the time he had escaped death by bullet and poison four times, and worse than death by trap upon nine occasions, he came to the conclusion that a change of air was for him imperative.

The jaguar was like a large leopard, only with his spots run into rosettes. He was heftier than any leopard, though, and fiercer by some few fierces.

The trouble was, where was there a refuge to go to for a hunted wild hunter upon all those desolate plains and sun-baked stretches? Where, indeed?

The jaguar left home—the ruined tomb of the king of some long-forgotten race—in the almost intolerable glare of the full sun upon his journey. He would much have preferred to "flit" during the darkest night, but a pillar of dust as yet far away but approaching, warned him of the starting of a big hunt on horseback—for him.

As the horsemen might be accompanied by dogs, he knew he would be found if he stayed. So he decamped—at a long, loose, padded, swinging trot, that hiked him over the rough ground much faster than it appeared to; and, of course, being a cat, a supercat, he hugged what cover he could get.

This time, however, the stockmen were in earnest, and did not stop to think on the brink of a drink when the sun got hot enough to frizzle all things save the little lizards upon the rock-slabs. They kept right on going. So did the jaguar; but with the grim, slow realization that he was a sprinter, but no stayer, and that his ever growing thirst was worse than death.

Thus it came about that by noonday he could not very well ignore the drumming of a bronco's hoofs not far to his right rear, and another to his left.

He heard also a shout, and threw an ominous snarl over his spotted, tawny shoulder in reply as he broke into a gallop.

He was heading toward the coast. The

smell of water, any water, in his nostrils made him do that. Water, said instinct, means forest in that land; and he was a forester by right, or his ancesters had been.

Then came the lasso—the first one.

The jaguar did not see it. He heard it fall short just behind, and make slithery noises like a snake. He set back his ears. His fangs bared.

Then came the second lasso.

The jaguar saw that. He had to jump over it as he flew—fairly flew now, in his last desperate dash to the shelter of some thick but shortish grass.

He gained the grass-patch even as the third lasso hit, and slipped along, his back. Untamable, ferocious beyond compare, a dread that stalked by night, a terror among the Indians, intolerant, implacable, lonely, the jaguar dived to the middle of that slight cover quaking in every limb, a beast beaten and cowed even to inertia. It was the lassos that had done it.

For full ten minutes the jaguar lay there, spent, in the middle of the grass-patch, only his head visible, a picture of fury and hate, while the finest horsemen in the world circled around outside, trying to lasso that furious head—and failing.

The broncos would not enter the grass, and the dogs thought that the reason the horses had was a good one—for a cornered jaguar in thick grass is several kinds of a deadly proposition. And in the end the stockmen set fire to the grass, and waited.

THE seared stems burned like tinder, the flames racing along before the wind in a crackling, reeking furnace, but the jaguar did not move.

The red, dancing, leaping line fairly flew down upon him, chasing its own choking clouds of smoke, till they both together seemed to envelop him, and that terrible, great, spotted, broad head, still and motionless and grinning, faded, faded gradually out before the amazed onlookers—faded and was swallowed up.

Not when the smoke fumes nearly asphyxiated him; not when the smell of his singeing fur mingled with the rest; not till the sting of the flames, actually licking up his legs, broke the spell, did the jaguar come to life, as it were back, and leap for that life ahead of the fire. By then he was invisible.

If it had been a race before, it was a greater race now. The flames fairly tore along in that dry place, and he could not see a yard on either hand whither he was going. He only knew that the flames were gnashing at his tail, and that instinct shrieked in his ear—

"Make for the sea!"

He made for the sea accordingly, the sea he could not see—nor anything else for the first quarter of a mile, for the matter of that—but knew was there.

The fire was far behind when the great spotted cat got to the shore by way of sandhills, and lay down, panting. It had stopped with the gutting of the grass-patch—but the stockmen were not far behind.

They had spotted the jaguar at last, clear of the smoke, galloping like a great dog far across the blistered plain, and were now drumming down upon him, dogs, horses, and men, in a yelling cloud of dust, that—it seemed—must end with his end.

Now for it!

The sea, in that burning sun, almost blinded him; but the jaguar could see far enough across the waves a low line of dark trees, walking, so it seemed, upon the face of the waters—or was it a mirage dancing tauntingly in the heat flurry? Could the jaguar see a mirage anyway?

The big, flat, spotted, brilliant head turned slowly and gazed steadfastly at the excited crowd sweeping down upon him. For a moment he permitted himself a bare-fanged, twisted-lipped, evil snarl—the jaguar's "blessing"—then waded into the warm, glinting, blinding water and resolutely struck out.

The brute was a fine swimmer. Though he personally had been born and had lived upon the plains all his life, and never crossed anything bigger than a stream, he came of forest ancestors used to dealing with the world's largest rivers.

He forged ahead grandly, head well up, and with the confidence that comes of conscious ability.

A rifle cracked along the old-gold sand, but the sundance on the water dazzled, and the bullet spat—*plup*—yards short. Another and another spoke, and the bark of the .30-30 Marlin repeaters came to the swimmer's ears plainly as the bullets shot up miniature spouts all around him; but the broad, yellow head kept on, and on, and on, steady, straight, untouched, unflurried.

At last one long shot clipped his right

ear. It looked like a biscuit from which a piece has been bitten, but even that did not turn or stop him. A last flurry of reports, a last "covey of death" spattering up the surface, and he was out of range—their range anyway.

"Never mind," said the stockmen to each other. "Guess the sharks'll get him, fellers. You betcha."

But the sharks did not get him. They had heard the firing, or felt the concussion of the bullets in the water, or something, and turned their knife-bladed back-fins the other way.

Slowly but strongly the jaguar came to the mangrove forest. It was a remarkably wet, and a lugubrious, dark, noisome, muddy, and smelly place. In fact, it was not like any ordinary forest at all. Dante might have described it.

It was not tall—the sea winds saw to that. It had no true tree-trunks—the sea itself saw to that. It was like a forest of pier-piles; a forest of many-headed hydras with hundreds of legs stuck in the mud. And the sea sucked and gurgled in and out among the legs, otherwise roots. Great freak crabs, blue and freakish crabs, red played grimly in and out among the branches that wound and twisted like a thousand snakes.

THE jaguar—his claws rasped in the wet hollowness—had hauled himself up the roots, high above high tide among the writhing stems and branches, before he discovered that the mangrove forest was a world unto itself—inhabited by its own living beasts and birds, insects and sea folk, beside the crabs.

Wings flapped above, and great herons removed themselves from his company. Some diving bird thing, all wet and shiny, hit the water with a loud *plop* as it took the sea.

A head, yellow, flat, broad, black-spotted, big and slit-eared, thrust from a tangle of branches and foliage and made evil remarks to his address in a language that—petrified him. It was his own language, the talk of the jaguar people, *their* swear words.

And the jaguar changed as he stiffened from heavy jaw to padded heel. He contorted into a calamity, ready set for trouble—a cast statue of ferocity. It is a way cats have. Nine times out of ten it is just thrice perfected bluff.

This was the tenth time.

For one thing, the plains jaguar had grown larger; that was fur on end. For another, he had sprouted some height; that was arched back. For another, he moaned, horribly, quietly, and to himself; but it is not quite clear what that was for.

The head remained, like a head in a picture, framed in gnarled stems.

The jaguar did not. He turned half sidewise—to side-leap at need. He stood like a horse hard held with a bearing rein on, champing at air. Then—he faded out, still sidewise, crab-fashion, a step at a time.

But he had seen what human eyes could not have seen—the flick of a thin ear tickled by a fly, two yards to the left of the head among the foliage. And he had smelled what human nostrils most assuredly could not have smelled on the salt breeze—though the bigger cats bear an acrid taint—the odor of not one jaguar, but two, and the other a lady—*dux femina facti*.

Upon the plains, where the jaguar had lived all his life, the stockmen had seen to it that lady jaguars were rare creatures. Indeed, this plains jaguar had never seen one till that precise psychological moment. If he had, he might not have wandered afar worrying the herders of cattle. As it was——

The return of the jaguar ten minutes later, and flying—at least, he was not touching anything as he came—from the opposite side to that in which he had faded and gone out, was intended as a surprize, and would have been to humans, but not to the other jaguars. Cats do that sort of thing. It is one of their little specialties.

Surprize is the essence of tactics. Meeting it—the art.

The other male jaguar did not show whether he was surprized or not; probably not. He was not there when the plains jaguar landed where his back had been. He left the branch as the other arrived upon it. Also he exploded like a firework benefit in the process. Perhaps he realized what he had missed, or what had missed him.

But both jaguars were so obsessed with each other that they forgot their surroundings. Cats are likely to do that when they squabble, all the world over. There is no health in it, though.

The plains jaguar's lathy hind-limbs landed upon a crab and a branch; you could hear the claws scrape upon the horny carapace. And he knew nothing about crabs! Then he spun with a startling explosion.

The crab had locked home one pincer to his tail. The jaguar would have acted the same if a baby had touched him from behind with a little finger; his nerves were in that state. He pictured rival male jaguars on every hand. He was all heated up and scorched! But even a jaguar can not for long chase his own tail on mangrove branches slippery with the green scum of the sea.

A loud and spluttering double splash announced the end of his catherine-wheeling.

The other jaguar, to save himself, had sprung at what seemed to be an inviting wall of foliage he could pull himself up on. It grew, however, like a screen that gave toward the sea.

Thus resulted the picture of one fine male jaguar, very flat-eared, hanging futilely on to some branches of mangrove that swung out and out, and bent down and down, until he realized that there was no sense in hanging on to them any longer. He was already up to his neck in water.

Now, see how Fate lets down those good, scientific, learned ones who dogmatize upon the survival of the fittest.

The water was shallowish at that precise spot. There was mud upon which the mangroves throve in their own peculiar way. As the jaguar turned and struck out for the nearest root-landing his hind legs churned up this mud.

THERE was a flash as of red flame in the depths, a blurry, indistinct outline of something big and long that writhed, and—the jaguar shot upward, pawing wildly, with a blood-curdling roar.

Then he fell back inert, struggled feebly, galvanized to madness again, collapsed and drifted away on the strong tide, swimming feebly, banged his head on a root, spun round, drifted on, hit something else, revolved, and so, in and out among the lugubrious roots, was carried, slowly, surely, drifting from sight.

He did not come back.

He had touched off an electric eel, a nasty, big, brown, compressed thing, with a flaring scarlet throat, from what little could be seen; and it, fearing attack, had given him a shock, perhaps two shocks. A flood must have washed the eel to that unfortunate place.

Meanwhile, the plains jaguar, having shaken off the incubus of the crab, slowly scratched, and scraped, and scrambled his way up the first roots he found that offered a hold.

As he did so his tail came within an inch of the gigantic eel thing, and had that tail touched it, contact would have been effected and the tail would have been as good a conductor as any other part of the body so far as the resulting shock was concerned. But that *is* Fate.

Above, among the twisted mangrove branches, the jaguar found the eternal feminine, sitting humped and cynically comfortable, as she had sat all along. She turned her yellow, spotted head and regarded him with cruel, inscrutable eyes.

Then she rose, and, stretching deliberately and insolently, yawned in his face.

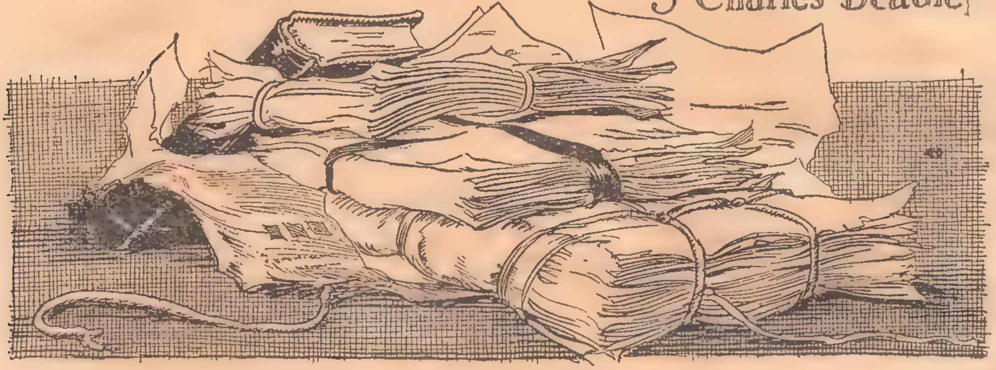
The other jaguar had been the finer beast, but—well, he was gone, and meanwhile there was this one purring and blandishing in his place. Enough. She patted at that other a flirtive, saucy pat, the sort of pat that would have ripped half his cheek off if he had not dodged unconcernedly as only cats can.

Then the two slouched off to fish for turtles, which is perhaps a more exciting way of spending a honeymoon than fishing for compliments.

Gifts of Diamonds

A Complete Novelette

by Charles Beadle



Author of "Buried Gods," "The Land of Ophir," etc.

FOREWORD

A WRITER'S mail-bag is usually supposed to contain rejection slips and bills, varied by way of breaking the monotony, by a check. But one morning, in 19—, among the aforesaid classical contents was a registered package which I naturally took to be a returned manuscript or a bundle of proofs. Then I observed that the parcel had been readdressed and bore the stamps of the British Central African Protectorate. Wondering who on earth could have sent me anything from Blantyre, where I had never been, I cut the string and discovered on the top of a bundle of manuscripts a letter. The manuscripts were fairly difficult to decipher from age and exposure. I have no need of explanation. I have merely arranged them in the most intelligible order.

Office of the District Commissioner.
Masapani, B. C. A.,
February 15, 1921.

Sir:—I have come into possession of certain papers addressed to you and herewith enclosed.

My duty as sub-commissioner took me into the country of the Makanga on the Portuguese border, a district which has but lately come under practical administration. The case had to do with a particularly malignant outbreak of witchcraft. During the course of my investigations I learned that the defendant, a local chief, had a notorious reputation as a witch-doctor on account of some extremely powerful fetish which he possessed. I ruled that the fetish in question should be brought into court, which was accordingly done. It proved to be a rusty dispatch case of the ordinary kind, upon which was faintly discernible the initials B. W. H.

Although I made every possible effort I was unable to discover in what circumstances the box, which the natives ignorantly considered a fetish, had come into the man's possession.

Upon forcing the lock I discovered the aforesaid papers addressed to you. I may state that in my official capacity I have read them, and that in order to avoid unnecessary porterage and freight I have not deemed it necessary to send the box, which is of no intrinsic value.

I have the honor to be, sir,
Your obedient servant, etc.

Written in pencil, around the margin of a page of one of my own short stories—scarcely decipherable.

Monomatapa's, March 23, 1912.

My dear old boy:—I guess you will be more than considerably surprized to hear from me! Lots of cocktails must have flowed down your throat since last we raised our elbows in company. Since then the most banal (?) things have happened and the strangest. Of course I've never forgotten you nor our trip Baroste way, and particularly lately— But if ever you get this it is due to the chance of my coming across this yarn of yours in a magazine sent in the last mail—mor'n a year ago—I bumped against Harry Martin of all people in Quilimane. But he was too —— wise. Haven't got time to explain. You'll see. By the row they're making I guess it's "Time, gentlemen, please!" —— nasty medicine. Feel sick in the belly like a kid going ——. But they'll pay. Love, dear old pal.—
BRAN.

Scribbled in large letters across print:

—— Sake Don't Fall For This. Enough Fool Adventurers?

Written in ink and indelible pencil in a canvas-covered note-book.

"*Gifts of Diamonds,*" *copyright, 1922, by Charles Beadle.*

Feb. 28.—I've surely never dreamed of writing a kind of an autobiography, but as I've read the two magazines and the three newspapers from cover to cover at least twenty times including the ads, and the job will keep me from thinking, which is neither healthy nor amusing just now, I am going to do so. At any rate I'm in good company—as you'll see. If it ever reaches civilization it may serve for a yarn to warn other fool adventurers from chasing will-o'-the-wisps of fortune.

Yet I guess it won't; for we of the breed blessed or cursed with a mania to wander the four corners of the earth wishing there were five, will never listen to reason like the fellow who hiked up the Andes and down again, just because some fool had told him it couldn't be done. I guess this is my fifth corner. Reminds me of some nursery riddle—when you get in, you can't get out. What is it? I suppose I'd better start in the ancient manner of chroniclers by giving some account of myself. So here goes!

I'm five feet eleven in my bare toes, fairly husky, ginger-haired, and I was born and raised in Bawston, U. S. A., although I don't pronounce it like that and only mention the fact when I'm drunk. My father came of an old family, never worked and yet seemed to be respectable as far as I ever knew him. This doesn't seem right somehow, but I've read something like it in an old book and anyway, Charles, you can put on the trimmings.

I escaped when I was about seventeen with an accent, some Latin, less Greek and fixed ideas on pirates and explorers—they seemed to be the same to me. Since then I've gotten rid of all of 'em except the pirate and the explorer. However, I only got as far as New York. I hadn't known then that pirates herded in towns and as I was rather crude on exploring I had to be rescued.

Dad seemed more bored than angry, and after mother had quit weeping, I was packed off West to learn to be a man. I was a diligent student for quite a while until I got tired of alkali dust and the deplorable lack of bad-men. Then I continued West until I hit Frisco. "Two Years before the Mast," it was I think started an awful craving to "round the Horn." Dad seemed to think well of the proposition. Some unknown gentlemen in Frisco got the money and I the trip round the Horn.

By the time I had arrived in Shanghai I was prejudiced in my estimate of the writer of that book. There I got into an argument with a fellow who didn't like my face. I'm not crazy about it myself. Describe it, Charles, and be as merciful as you can. Anyway, he went to hospital and I to jail, from which delectable abode I was rescued by the American consul. Somehow or other I'm always being rescued. But there's nothing doing this time I guess——

I read this over yesterday and swore I'd quit. I'm not a writer anyway. But I'll have a shot to go through with it as I reckon it does me good.

It's awful hot today and the mosquitoes are already busy, even though it's only about four. There's a thrumming of those guitar things from the women's quarters and young slave girls—dandy figures, like young antelopes — are bringing water through the compound from the river.

After the Shanghai affair, the consul—a solemn fool with no soul—wanted to ship me back to the States like a returned empty, but nothing for me. I borrowed some money from him, giving him a check on dad and skipped. I turned up in Colombo where of course I put up at the Galle Face, and went broke. Darned nice boys that bunch were. Fellow took me up to his plantation and made me so comfy I might have stopped there till now. ——, don't I sometimes wish I had! He was a white man, Jimmy Fergusson. I hope he's going strong and wonder whether he recollects the night the Tamil coolies ran amuck and old Tindley fell in the lake with a knife-cut through his pants?

Heard from Dad up in the hills. He was mighty peeved; seemed to have figured out that I ought to have become Emperor of China by this time, just because I was his son, bless him! But he was a sport. Sent some money as usual and a hint that when I was prepared to quit fooling he'd be pleased to see me, but not until then. He came from the South and by all accounts overheard when he was spinning yarns about the North and South with old Judge Blenkinsopp from Georgia, when mother wasn't there and I wasn't supposed to be listening, he had been a wild blade himself. I can recollect—guess I must have been about nine or ten—the dad sprawling his legs in a chair and pulling his long mustaches with his "By ——, yessir," "By

——, no sir," and deciding with much pride, that he was a pirate!

Singabulu turned up with an order from the Monomatapa that I was to walk about the compound for the people to see. Like —— I did. They're outside now, moaning and groaning their heads off, and there they can darn well stop until—

But I'm writing this to keep my mind occupied.

WELL to go on. After Colombo I went back to China just in time to get mixed up in the Boxer rising. Then I had the idea of going back home by way of Europe, but got tempted and fell for a Thibetan expedition through meeting Sir Alfred Trent. The dad helped me again. The outfit ended by getting shut up in a Buddhist monastery in the Gobi where they proposed to make a one-night show of us for the benefit of the faithful. The British Indian Government cussed like blazes and had to send an expedition to dig us out.

Two years later I got back to Calcutta to hear of dad's death. That shook me up badly. It appeared from letters from sis that he'd dropped every darn cent—or pretty near—speculating. Anyway I'd have to work for my living.

That did me a mighty lot of good—I mean having to work for a spell. About that time I got a romantic bug in my head that I'd retrieve the family fortunes. You see the mater and sis had practically been sold up and weren't having at all a good time and as I seemed to be the only he male around it seemed up to me.

With what little cash I had left I went off to South Africa, intending to find a second de Beers, arguing optimistically that if there was one there must be another. I was right, but it took me many years to find this place and now— I've got one pretty nigh as big as the Kohinoor right here in my pocket in a Bull bag, but I guess it'll stop there as far as I can see, and over there in a calabash——

I spent a couple of years around the Kalahari and the Vaal and learned lots of useful things, but I didn't get any nearer mending the family exchequer. Then came the Barotse expedition with you, Charles, and although luck wasn't with us, we didn't have a bad time, did we? I've got the scar of that pot leg on my ribs still. After you went to Europe and there was nothing doing in the company promotion business, I tried East Africa, still chasing stones.

I did find a likely pipe down German East, but couldn't do anything for I was too busy keeping a whole skin. I eventually got back as far as fifty miles from Nairobi, carrying a rifle with no cartridges and the clothes I stood up in—or rather lay down in, for I got kinder tired and went to sleep under a bush where a police-patrol hunting Nandi found me in time. Rescued again, you see! I never had any luck!

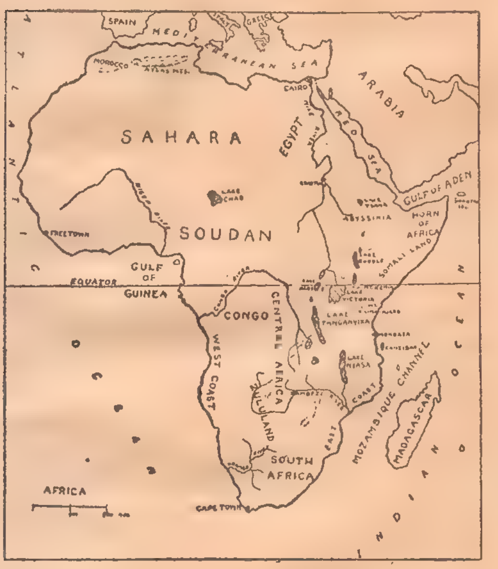
After that for a spell I really did have to work for a living—by work I mean for another fellow. Didn't like it at all. Since the Kalahari failure I had never written home. What was the good anyway? I couldn't do anything. They'd hear fast enough from me when— Well, it's mostly that way with our bunch, isn't it?

It was at Nairobi that I met Tom Perrinkle. He'd been all over Egypt, Arabia and the Lord knows where and lately he'd quit a surveyor's job on the rail-head and took me along for a prospecting-hunting trip. The hunting was fine, but the other was a dud. Tom was a white man right through and crazy. But what he didn't know about mining wasn't worth the trouble and he taught me heaps.

He left me there to make for Johannesburg via Delagoa Bay. He wanted me to go, but I'd had enough of the south. I didn't feel I had any luck there. You know the feeling. Finally I got a job on the rail through him. I tinkered and cussed for a year or more with no chance of getting out of the rut, and I was mighty sorry before I was through that I hadn't accepted Tom's offer.

Then I started up in Uganda with the few bucks I'd saved—yessir, I surely did save — transport running and trading. Worked it up some and six months later when I was so right up to the neck with the monotony of it—it would have taken twenty years to clean up enough to put the family right anyway—I got a fair offer. I dealt and cleared out. Where to go I didn't know.

A chance conversation in the hotel at Mombassa and the fact that a down-coast boat was in decided me to go south as far as Quilimane and see what was doing. No sooner had I landed on the mole than the first man I ran into was Harry Martin, whom you'll remember in Buluwayo. He's married—pretty little Portuguese girl—got fat in spite of the heat, and is running a saloon, hotel, ship-chandlers, and seems to have a finger in half a dozen outfits there.


SPAIN
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
GREECE
MOROCCO
ATLAS MTS.
CAIRO
ARABIA
SAHARA
EGYPT
NILE
RED SEA
GULF OF ADEN
LAKE CHAD
ABYSSINIA
HORN OF AFRICA
SOMALI LAND
FREETOWN
SOUDAN
GULF OF GUINEA
EQUATOR
CONGO
CENTRAL AFRICA
LAKE VICTORIA
LAKE TANGANYIKA
LAKE NIASA
WEST COAST
ZULULAND
SOUTH AFRICA
EAST COAST
MOZAMBIQUE CHANNEL
MADAGASCAR
INDIAN OCEAN
ATLANTIC
AFRICA
CAPE TOWN

In the evening when we were sitting on the piazza yarning, and I was fishing for news of any mining or other likely venture, he asked whether by chance I knew Tom Perrinkle.

"Sure," said I.

"Thought so by your thatch," said he.

And then he told me that Tom had passed through some eighteen months or more before; he'd gotten a notion, said Harry, to go prospecting up to the north-west, toward the border of German East, where the country had never been touched by a white. He wanted Harry to go along, but he was married and all that and too fat to have any romance. Anyway off went Tom. Then six months later Harry got a letter by runner telling what he called the craziest yarn he'd ever set eyes on. Tom reckoned he was on the road to find a second Kimberley. Of course this made me sit up and take notice.

"Where is he?" I asked excitedly.

"Kingdom Come probably, old son," returned Harry in his heavy, funny-man style. "He wanted me to go in with him. I don't think! Those days are past for me. Anyway, he wanted a lot of gear sent up and I sent it, and that's the last I've heard of him from that day to this."

"Oh, my ——!" I groaned. "If only I'd have come down with him!"

When I pestered him for details, he grunted, and clambering out of his chair, fetched a packet.

"Read the crazy loon's nonsense for yourself, only if you'll take my advice you'll let it be."

Sitting under the light from the window, with a Portuguese wailing a love-song to a guitar somewhere around, I read this letter:

Kalambwi's Kraal.

My dear Martin:

You're a lazy sinner, loving too much the flesh-pots of Egypt. Only to the righteous and the energetic are the true rewards of virtue! Hasten, thou sluggard and gird up thy loins, pick up thy staff and follow in my footsteps, while the way is yet open! Tell your charming wife that indeed she shall have diamonds far too large for her coral ears and for a pendant a cluster that shall strike blind the eyes of the envious as a too little reward for granting you leave of absence!

To reduce to vile terms of commerce and barter understandable to your ears coarsened by much trafficking with the wily Portuguese and the simple native, I can not descend farther than to invite you to become co-director in a claim that's going to make old man Eckstein, Rhodes, Beit and that common crowd look like lousy beggars on the steps of Our Lady of Sorrows in the Plaza.

I am trying to hunt up something that will put some ginger into your carcass, you unbelieving son of satan, for I shall want some one to help me support fat Midas. I shall be so —— rich that I shan't have a soul in the world with whom I can possibly be on speaking terms!

Proofs, foul heretic? All right. I've got them here in my hand. Suppose I've got to tell you everything, else there won't be an earthly of moving you. Here they are.

Well, first of all, the whole thing happened as a direct reward of my well-known virtue and interest in matters not of this world and all that sort of thing. A week ago I ran into an Arab from Zanzibar just near here. A nice old man, Tippo Tib style, making the works of Allah beautiful throughout the land and so pious that he doesn't have to be able to read in order to quote the Koran backwards and forwards—for which much praise to said Allah.

Well, we did a bit of trade and afterward over coffee—where do these swine get their coffee? I'll swear it was real Mocha, but I was too interested to ask. Afterward, over said coffee, we became engrossed in dispute as the fathers would say. I found his theology differed something exceedingly to that current in Arabia and Egypt; it seemed to be a special brand of his own. I'm big guns on Islamic law which probably you never guessed. The dispute waxed mighty and I, not having a Koran on me, defied him to show reason, cause or justice according to the sacred words of Mohammed.

The gray-bearded sinner, only too willing to confound the heretic, fumbled somewhere around his fat belly and dragged forth a small book with a filthy worn cover, with odds and ends of charms attached, as they have in some parts. Solemnly opening the book on his knees he appeared to quote a passage of a sura confirming his contention. I told him that I could read Arabic and begged him to permit me to see the passage which I maintained was garbled out of all semblance to the original. Triumphantly he handed the book to me with one henna nail on a paragraph written in—now what d'you think?—French!

Had I not had the habit of the Arab manner I should have given a yell of derisive laughter, but for the sake of curiosity to know what it was, thinking at first that it was perhaps a translation in French, I pretended to consult the alleged oracle of divine wisdom written in such a crabbed tiny hand that one might forgive a man who couldn't read a word in any language, for thinking that it might be Arabic, Sanskrit or Chinese.

I wonder he didn't hear my brain machinery start off with a whirr. I squeezed some sense out of that paragraph and a few others and did a hundred yards mental sprint in less than ten seconds. I pulled a face and told him I was forced to admit that he was right. He was tickled to death—but not so much as I was.

I made pretty remarks about that wonderful copy of the Koran and various observations regarding the antiquity of the text and begged permission to look over it. Turning to the end casually I had all I could do not to start an Irish jig and kiss the wily old sinner at the same time. After fossicking around as much as I dared, I returned the book, remarking that I wished that I had such a splendid copy. I duly noted how he rose to the bait by the faint gleam in his watery eyes.

I hung around making love to old Mahmud Ali for a week and more before I struck. Then saying that I was going on safari, I casually asked to see the wonderful book once more, dallied about, admiring the filthy cover and the charms, and said half laughing that I'd rather like to have it, and how much did he want for it. Of course he said it wasn't for sale. But I knew better. Is there anything an Arab has, except his wives, that isn't for sale? But it took me three more days and cost me three loads of goods, but—Oh, had he known what he'd been carrying around for —— knows how many years! He swore he'd had it since a young man and had taken it from a slave who had had it as a fetish. Quite likely the old boy wasn't lying for once.

I know, oh romantic one, you're fuming in the heat and wanting to know what it was anyway! Ah, ha ha! and also cube root ho! ho! The body of the "Koran" was the diary of a Frenchman. First part uninteresting; ordinary fossicking about and what not. But, about half-way through there's an entry at Tete where he had met a Jesuit who had told him a yarn that had made him so excited that most of it I couldn't read.

The next entry, two days later, he had sobered down and gave facts. It appeared that the Jesuit had been talking about the early martyrdom and all that of their order in Africa and in the course of the narrative had mentioned the first Jesuits who had penetrated into the interior by the river Cuami (Zambezi). These three had managed to get into the "middle of Africa" according to him, had established a station there more or less and then had been strangled by the Monomatapa.

Gonçalo da Silveria was the name of the leader and they had managed to get out reports to their superior in Chindé, who duly sent it on to the then governor-general of Portuguese East Africa, which was at that time under the vice royalty of Portuguese India, at Cochin, the Dom Affonso Gonzalvo d'Alboquerque the son of the Grande Affonso.

This had happened in 1561. More than two hundred years later along came Dom Francisco Jose Maria de Lacerda e Almeida

—about 1797—as local governor. He was an energetic blighter apparently, Portuguese or no, and conceived the idea of establishing a chain of stations right across the continent from Portuguese East Africa to Angola on the Portuguese West.

Before starting on this trip he had naturally read up the archives and came across the account of the three murdered Jesuits and their report to the governor, in which it was incidentally mentioned that when building their hut on the ground which the Monomatapa had given them, they had found some whitey-green pebbles and had noticed the peculiar color of the ground, a kind of yellow-bluey clay, they described it. Oh, oh, to think of it, the sweet innocents!

They didn't know, but Gonçalo, the old dear, imagined that they might be diamonds and begged leave to send two as big as a pigeon's egg as samples, which, if they so proved worthy, be given, one to His Excellence and the other as an offering for his preservation in Africa to the Blessed Lady of Sorrows in Sofala. Makes one positively ill, old man!

What became of the specimens as big as pigeons' eggs history doth not relate; probably stuck in somebody's podgy fingers on the way. Well, all this was given *in extenso* for that dear old Mathurin le Coq had laboriously copied—evidently translated—from a copy which the Jesuit had made from the original in Cochin. This was sewn up in that wonderful Koran!

Now, you rotten unbeliever! More? All right!

Well, Dom Francisco Jose Maria de Laçerada e Almeida was a merry soul and evidently thought that a Pride of Africa would look well in his august sovereign's hatband and bring him considerable preferment as well as those stones which might go to grace his own manly beauty and purse. His letters to a friend in Quilimane were unearthed by our friend the Jesuit and revealed several interesting items.

The chief is that his excellency the dom after traveling up the Zambesi beyond Tete, their most westward station, arrived at a river running north—the Shire—where he did a little private exploring, cunning old ——!

One letter says that they had come out upon a lake—Nyassa obviously—and were following it. The last letter from him states that they have left the lake for the east and have been marching for fifteen days; he is in great hopes of reaching the Kraal of the Monomatapa, with the help of the Virgin, the site of the murder of the three holy martyrs on the morrow. He's great on religious concern for the Christian reburial of the bodies—as if he actually could have expected to find their two-hundred-year-old bones—and then complains bitterly of ill health and much fever, and adds inconsequently that he had the day before obtained a round pebble from one of his servants, who had picked it up in the dry river-bed where they are encamped and which he is sure is undoubtedly a diamond.

After that he disappears. The only trace of his fate can be found in the archives which states that Dom Francisco and all the rest of it, died of fever in Central Africa in 1798.

Isn't that enough to stir your sluggish blood, you great ox?

Well, it was enough for our friend, Mathurin le Coq. He seems a pious sort of —— for he attributes the find to the direct act of God acting presumably through the Jesuit. Anyway he started getting things together immediately. He doesn't say exactly whether the Jesuit was in on the venture too, but it sounds like it from the help the priest gave him.

Well, the rest of his diary is a brusk account of the trip, direction, approximate mileage, tribes encountered, scraps; a map—pretty crude it's true—is pasted in the book as well. Yes, and the stones are there all right! He describes the ground as "sewn with stones as thickly as the altar of Notre Dame de Paris" which tells where he came from!

The last few entries are concerned with his arrival at the Monomatapas, who "received him very well" giving rich presents of ivory and who he comments, had not the faintest idea of the value of the pebbles scattered about the dry river-bed near the kraal. Seems a pretty big kraal, by the way,. and the country around densely populated. What price labor, old dear?

The very last entry is written in a fever-shaken fist and reports sickness. Quite possibly the poor —— went under as Dom Thingummy seems to have done. Still they didn't know as much about malaria as we do now and it can't be worse than the coast anyway.

Now, if you don't think this is good enough and twice more, I do! Are you coming? If you don't—well you shan't play in my palace yard!

But seriously, man, up sticks and come along. Lord knows there's enough for a squadron of Rhodeses. On a trip like this one wants a good partner, one who's acclimated and knows Kiswahili and a bit of the lingo. If you won't, of course you won't and that's all. But I'm —— sorry if I can't shift you. You're just the man who would fit in. —— marriage! There, I can't help it, but that's what to my mind always ruins a man. If it wasn't for that charming little girl of yours you'd come running, —— you. A real good sport is hard to find. I'll wait here until your runner returns.

I had a red-haired young blighter with me up East and wanted to bring him along, but the silly ass wouldn't come. He'd suit splendidly but I can't waste the time to get him down.

By the way, I'm enclosing a list of gear I want and a draft on da Gama. Shove it off quickly. If you should come in, we'll double the order and fix up your own outfit.

By-by, you unbelieving heathen.

Tom Perrinkle.

P. S. Double that cigar order. The lord knows when I'll get a chance to renew it.

IMAGINE the effect on me, old man! The dream of dreams, and one of the best in the world waiting to welcome me there! Besides, hadn't old Tom asked for me? How I cursed the fool hunch that had headed me off! You bet I didn't waste two seconds in deciding. At last, I thought, I can go home and do the prodigal son stunt in style and provide the fatted calf my own little self. I even wrote a letter to the mater and sis, I was so up in the air about it. I'm sorry I did so now.

Of course old Harry grunted and croaked like a dismal married raven about not having heard from Tom for all that while. "——," said I, "why, you boob, he's too busy digging up Kohinoors to write!" As I was a bit shy on the outfit for a venture like that, he butted in handsomely in goods.

Thinking things over, and I did nothing else all day and three-quarters of the sweaty nights, I was fully alive to the benefit of having a good partner. I was certain that if I could locate one, Tom wouldn't kick at all, for as he had said, "there's enough for a squadron of Rhodeses!" But as far as Harry knew at the moment there wasn't a likely man he'd trust further than he could throw him, in Quilimane.

I determined to see it through alone and moreover to travel straight for Kalaumbwi's kraal—Harry found me a boy to take me—and pick up Tom's trail. Without the Frenchman's map—and Tom hadn't remarked where he had started from—there was no use in following up the Zambesi and Shire on the Dom's trail.

Of course it took more than a few days to get together the *safari* and besides I had to wait for a few things to be sent up from Delagoa. On the Sunday following who should turn up but Jack Wheeler from British East, where he'd been some four years. He seemed a good sport, was a good shot, and spoke Kiswahili. I didn't know much of him—just casually in Nairobi, but I knew that you had known him in the police in Rhodesia, and Harry as well. He was looking for a job. Harry suggested it, I liked the cut of him, and I thought it was a God-given chance.

Harry had a great big dog—lord knows what breed, cross between a mastiff and a wolf he looked—which he told me I could have as he was too much of a handful with women around. If I filled him up with arsenic, said he, we might get him through the fly belt and maybe he'd live. Wheeler looked at the beast and remarked that he'd be a nuisance on the trip if he was savage. I laughed and said casually, "Oh, don't be an old woman! I'll break him in."

The next day Wheeler turned up with a young yellow beast about as big as a collie, and asked politely enough whether I'd mind his bringing the dog along.

"Sure," said I, "if one don't get through maybe the other will and they'll always be mighty useful as camp dogs. Maybe we can train 'em for buck hunting."

So it was Kopman and Oompie came along. We fixed matters up and on the second of February, 1912, we started out from Quilimane.

Night, old man, I'm going to quit for my wrist aches like ——. They're busy with the drums tonight. Sometimes they get on my nerves.

LAST night I had a fit of the blues, regular southern ones, if you know what I mean. Wanted to lift my head and howl wolf fashion, just the same I've seen a darky do way down Louisiana way. Then I got mad; talked to myself as a fellow does alone. If I only knew what's happened to Tom and the others. That's the thing that drives me crazy——

Just fed, and like an animal, which I seem likely to become, I feel better. I'll go on with the yarn and forget things maybe.

Well, we got clear of the Qua Qua River and hummed along fine. I was mighty pleased that Wheeler could sling the bat as you Britishers say. He seemed a great kid and we'd sit yapping about what we'd do with the dough we were so sure to clean up. I told about Tom, what a great fellow he was, and the times we'd had, and swapped the usual camp-fire yarns.

Wheeler's dog would lie at his feet and proved a friendly beast, but Kopman was as Harry had described him, a devil dog. He'd growl even when I fed him and the first time we had the inevitable difference of opinion I had to tie him up and thrash him with a sjambok, with a gun in my left hand in case he broke loose, for he'd have surely had me. After more than several arguments he took it into his savage head that I was boss, but the nearest he'd ever get to being pally was to sit beside me and show his fangs as I patted his great skull. He wouldn't have anything to do with anybody else and treated Oompie as some kind of no-account stiff who had somehow wandered into camp.

Five days out we were well into the lion belt and had to tie the dogs up at night. At the scent down-wind or the roar, Oompie would crouch and whimper, but Kopman would stare savagely into the night and growl steadily. Harry had said he was reported to have tackled and killed a hyena on his own. I was scared lest he'd make a break and go for the nearest lion and get his back broken for his trouble.

The next night we were camped by a small river and had built a *zareba*, for the boys were jumpy about the lions. About eight we were sitting by the fire listening to a fellow roaring about half a mile away and the continuous growl of Kopman, when suddenly Wheeler grabbed for his rifle lying against a camp chair and I noticed Kopman's mane standing erect. Listening, we heard close to the *zareba* fence the low *wough* of a lion.

"That beggar means mischief," said Wheeler. "Let's go after him."

"Don't shoot except for a sure shot," I warned, as I took my rifle and shouted to my headman, Gambazi, to get a brand from the fire.

"Lie down, you fool."

I was swearing at Kopman, who was straining on his chain pegged to the ground, when I heard a shout and Wheeler fired. Then came a scream and a hubbub and I saw in the gleam of the fire a tawny mass dragging away a native. I leaped over a camp chair and running, fired for the shoulder. As I jerked at the magazine, the beast rose at me. I turned to dodge, tripped over a calabash, and came down on my face in the fire. I was conscious of a growling noise and a grunt, yells from my boys and a shot as I scrambled through the embers and out the other side.

When I rose I saw the lion on the ground and Kopman with his fangs buried in the wind-pipe. Expecting to see one blow of the terrified paw rip the dog open I raised my rifle, but heard Wheeler shouting: "All right! Got him!"

Kopman, breaking his chain, had charged the beast as he was turning to grab me, and almost simultaneously Wheeler, not six yards away, had fired, getting him behind the left ear. I had to lambaste Kopman with a pole to make him let go the dead beast and then he wanted to turn on me. The boy had been badly mauled in the thigh and I found that my shirt sleeve had been ripped and that I was bleeding from a flesh wound in the shoulder-blade. Rescued once more, you see.

"Thanks," said I to Wheeler, as we returned to our fire, "you and Kopman sure saved me some trouble."

"Kopman!" he answered with a laugh. "Why I had to fire —— quick to save you both!"

I glanced at him, not liking the tone and the way he had said it, and felt, too, a bit humiliated. Of course I didn't take any notice, merely thinking afterward that he hadn't got much tact. From that moment he seemed to take a violent dislike to Kopman. Why, I couldn't understand as the brute wasn't his anyway.

One evening, after we had gotten out of

the lion belt and Kopman was loose, I heard him growl and came out from the tent to see Wheeler with a block of wood in his hand as if about to heave it at the dog, who was lying crouched for a spring with bare fangs. As I called to the dog to lie down, Wheeler turned away. I said to him quietly:

"Say, old man, I wish you'd leave the dog alone. He didn't try to go for you, did he?"

"Oh, he's a swine," retorted Wheeler, as he walked to the tent. "Best thing you can do with him is to put a bullet in his head."

I stared at him for a moment wondering at the evident viciousness of the tone, and then, thinking: "Oh, he's got a touch of malaria! Forget it." For fellows do get cranky, you know, with a temperature.

Well, we went along quietly after that outwardly, although there was an irritation rising underneath. Wheeler, to my disgust, began to sulk and if there's one thing I hate it is that. I'd rather have a man who flares up and spits out his grievance than one who hugs it to himself all the time. He marched alone, swearing at Oompie if the beast got anywhere near to Kopman, would answer in monosyllables and generally looked so glum and depressing that I longed to kick him. I seriously thought about sending him back, but I couldn't find any valid excuse and it was rather late for that.

The trail up to Kalambwi's wasn't very interesting; very little game and a lot of thin timber uninhabited and not much water. We did it in ten days, not bad going, for the men were pretty well loaded up, as I had taken as few as I could. There I had reckoned to get another crowd to go on with, as I thought it probable that Tom had done.

But on the first interview with the old man I found that there was going to be a lot of bother. Tom, it appeared, hadn't taken any men from there, or Kalambwi said he hadn't; anyway, they seemed to have a rooted objection to traveling northwest and to carrying loads at all.

However, they weren't much good, being fairly poor specimens hereabout. I decided to do my best to persuade my Quilimane men to come on with me and started negotiations right away. Of course, knowing or guessing that I was in a hole, they promptly started asking fantastic prices. However, after many *shauris*, I secured half of them and persuaded four bold lads from Kalambwi's to take a chance, which only necessitated leaving a couple of loads behind.

On the second day, who should turn up but Mahmud Ali, the fellow from whom Tom had gotten the wonderful Koran. I saw his caravan coming in as I was going to the kraal for a *shauri* with the chief, guessed who he was and wondered who the young Arab was with him. When I got back I found them both, and he turned out to be the Mahmud's son, Hafid ben Ali. During the palaver I carefully kept away from dangerous ground, merely inquiring whether he had met Tom, who was a friend of mine, and had heard what had happened to him.

Mahmud replied that he hadn't seen or heard of him for a year or more, when he had left from this same kraal, going prospecting to the northeast. To forestall the inevitable question of our destination, I volunteered the information that we were going to follow Tom's route. Mahmud thought that there was little likelihood of pay stuff there, and we went on talking about other things.

After they had gone, I said to Wheeler, for I hadn't foreseen the wild chance that had brought Mahmud there as we were passing—

"Say, don't forget if they come over rubbering round to keep up the yarn about our following Tom's trail to the northeast."

"Why?" demanded Wheeler, in his obstinate way. "What's the use of that?"

"Why, this fellow is the very man from whom Tom got the Koran with the Frenchman's diary in it and the other papers. Didn't you tumble when he came over? Naturally he'd be mighty sore if he knew."

"No," replied Wheeler, who seemed genuinely surprized. "Never entered my head."

The next day I had to go over for more talkee talkee and when I got back there were the two Arabs again. As I walked into camp I saw by the expression of Wheeler's face that something was up. He was jabbering away excitedly and examining something lying on the camp table.

"Look, man, look at this!" he exclaimed, as I was exchanging the usual salutations with the two Arabs, and strewed over the table were about a dozen or more small gold nuggets. "This fellow's found an alluvial bed somewhere near the headwaters of the Lurio. I vote we go there!"

I made a pretense of looking at the

samples, wondering why an Arab should go out of his way to put an easy fortune in our hands for nothing, and immediately became suspicious. I thanked him for the hint, talked vaguely about the place, the kind of ground and technical things. As soon as they were gone, Wheeler turned on me excitedly.

"Look here, I'm for going after that! That's pretty certain, but this diamond outfit—who knows whether there's anything in it at all."

"Aren't you fool-proof yet?" I retorted. "D'you think that Arab is going to shove a fortune in your pocket for nothing? Wild horses wouldn't drag the secret out of him if he had located such a find! Good Lord, you are simple!"

"Simple or not," he returned angrily, "I can see as straight as most, and if anything's more simple-minded than making a wild goose chase on the crazy hopes of your friend Perrinkle—whom you haven't even seen or heard of since he started out—I'd like to know it. Why, you haven't even seen a sample or any —— thing, and here this fellow has something to show at any rate. Harry Martin wasn't such an ass as to swallow the bait as you did."

"Why did you come then?"

"Because I wanted a job and —— well had to."

"Thanks," said I, dryly, "but if you feel like that about it you'd better go along with your Arab friend."

At that he went up in the air.

"All right, I will," said he, "if you'll let me have the goods and guns."

"I can't possibly do that," I retorted. "It isn't reasonable. You agreed to take a job with me, and it was mighty fair. You get your wages, win or lose, and twenty-five per cent. of all findings. What you've got to holler about on that I don't know."

"Bah!" he snarled, turning away, "you knew that —— well when you said that."

He went off sulking and I felt mighty sore. "Bright kind of pard," thought I, "for a trip like this," and wished to —— I'd tried it out on my own, as Tom had done. The rest of the two days before I could get away he spent most of the time in the Arab's camp fiddling about with the gold nuggets, which seemed to have turned his head.

After dinner on the evening before we were due to leave, Wheeler, who was staring sulkily at the fire, smoking, said grumpily—

"You won't reconsider going round by the Lurio to look up that place, Harvie?"

"Can't you see it's impossible?" I retorted, a bit sharply perhaps, for I was getting riled with his sulky business. "I started out on this and I'm going to see it through."

He scowled and kicked a log irritably, but didn't say a word. I fell to wondering dismally what was going to be the end of it; for I felt that it couldn't go on indefinitely. I studied him furtively, there in the dim light of the fire, speculating as to what was the real cause of his filthy temper—just sheer cussedness, I reckoned, a kind of kink some folks are born with—yet he'd seemed such a sporting kid way back in Quilimane. But then that's always the way. You never know a man until you're out of civilization.

NEXT morning, as we were striking camp, and the men were squabbling over their loads, he suddenly grumbled something about saying a word of good-by and stalked over to the Arab's camp.

"Lord!" I reflected, as I watched him going, "how I wish he'd stay there!"

And he was so long in showing up that I had begun to think that he had deserted at the last moment. Then, just as I had decided not to wait any longer, but to give the order to march, a shot rang out, followed by commotion in the Arab's camp.

"Of all the crazy boobs!" I muttered, as I hastened over. "What idiocy has he done now?"

By the time I got there I found him at the entrance of their *zareba*, in the middle of an excited group of natives, with Mahmud and his son jabbering their heads off.

"What the ——'s the matter now?" I demanded in English, as I came up.

"Caught one of these —— little rats trying to steal the bolt of my gun, and let him have it."

"What! You've shot one?"

"No," he snapped. "Missed!"

"But how the mischief could he steal——"

"Left my gun outside the tent while I was talking to Mahmud here. He's cutting up nasty about the swine."

I joined in the debate then. We adjourned to the tent and wasted three hours with the two of them. Mahmud appeared to be absurdly angry over the three drops of blood the fool Wheeler had drawn from a Somali's forearm. In the end I had to pay two blankets by way of compensation. All very annoying and irritating and moreover Wheeler, in his insane way, seemed to think that he was the injured party, and I was hard put to it to keep the peace, for the fool could easily have landed us in a serious scrap had he killed the boy. What the man had wanted to steal a bolt for I couldn't comprehend, although for a Somali, to whom stealing is second nature, it was feasible.

The presence of a white man in this part of the world was so rare that it was a time mark in native life—therefore I had little difficulty, in this thickly populated district, in tracing Tom's movements of a year and a half ago, usually finding at each village some one to act as guide to, or to tell me the name of the next.

For the first few days out Wheeler seemed to have forgotten the craze for gold and also his resentment against me, for he had got rid of his fit of the sulks and talked campfire chatter at night as he had used to do. Even at Kopman he would good-naturedly make faces and swear that he ought to be kept in a cage.

Except in a more or less permanent camp we had shared the same tent in order to avoid the nuisance of pitching and striking every night and Kopman slept on the outside of my camp-bed and Oompie on the outside of Wheeler's. On the night of the fifth day out I got up about four-thirty, and went outside, and as usual Kopman followed me. Oompie, who was not so well-trained, followed. I was looking at the half moon above the trees and wondering vaguely what had happened to Tom when I heard Wheeler shouting irritably:

"Oompie! Oompie! Come here, blast you!"

A few feet from me the dog was standing investigating a bush. Again came Wheeler's voice. Suddenly he darted through the tent door, shouting almost shrill with rage:

"By ——! I'll shoot that ruddy beast!"

I saw the gleam of the barrel of his revolver. A swift pang of rage sent me in a leap toward him.

"Don't be a fool," I commanded him, standing between him and the dog. "You're crazy, man!"

"I'll shoot that blasted beast of yours, too, for two pins. It's his fault, I'll shoot him, by ——!"

"What's the matter with you?" I demanded. "Naturally my dog followed me and Oompie came after him. Don't fool with that gun, and go to bed."

I walked past him calling to Kopman. I heard a quick step and Wheeler sprang after me. In the light of the hurricane lamp hung to the center pole I saw his eyes glaring insanely.

"By the living ——!" he shouted. "I'l! put a bullet through you!"

My gun was under my pillow, but I turned and looked at him as he pointed his gun at me.

"You're a fool, Wheeler," I said quietly. "Go to bed and don't be childish!"

Then I turned my back and rolled on to my bed, sliding my hand on to my own gun as I did so. I heard his breath coming fast. As I turned, ready to shoot, I saw him throw his revolver on to the bed and sit down suddenly. Then I pulled up my blankets and rolled in. Two minutes afterward I heard him sobbing.

"Good Lord," I thought, startled and kind of scared, "the fellow must be going crazy." Listening to a big man weep like a kid is one of the most horrible things I've ever heard.

Next morning I felt very much warmer toward him and half expected him to hold out his hand and say, "Sorry, I made a fool of myself" or something. But no, never a word. He avoided my eyes and rapidly developed a fresh fit of the sulks. That made me so mad that I began to have regrets that I hadn't taken the legitimate opportunity to shoot him when he pulled on me; also an active hatred of the man began to work, a combination of disgust and contempt.

A couple of days later, when we were halted for a spell on the top of a ridge, I was staring down the trail. To my astonishment I noticed another caravan coming along. At the first moment I had a wild hope that it might be Tom, but obviously he wouldn't be following me up. I didn't say anything to Wheeler, as I wasn't in the humor, and let the caravan go on. Presently the stranger emerged from a bit of scrub into the open again. I counted about thirty porters and then in the bright sun distinguished the robes of several Arabs or Somalis.

"Good Lord," I thought, "it must be Mahmud—and following me!"

It wasn't very likely that another Arab party would be on my trail. I drew back and went on pondering suspiciously upon what it could mean.

Sure enough, at that evening's camp, which happened to be a water-hole without any village near, the caravan toiled in, and at the tail was Hafid ben Ali, Mahmud Ali's son. Mighty queer, I thought, and waited.

I FEEL very tired. Malaria coming on I think. Couldn't resist looking at my bag of stones, and thinking what it would mean to the mater and sis. What had happened to them, what were they doing— Good ——, we could pretty nigh buy up Georgia. I've thought myself nearly crazy trying to find a way out. Force is obviously impossible and these —— But, oh, what's the use? The other fellows— You'll see. Perhaps. Well, if you don't, your literary executor, if you have such a creature, will. All a question of time. And for me, too, I guess. But in the mean time I've got to stick to my job. Really does me good. Kind of feel as if I were having a chat with you, old man.

I recollect I was mighty sick that night. I mean when Hafid ben Ali turned up. The very first thing I noticed was that no sooner had the caravan arrived than Wheeler looked cheerful. I hated myself for it at the time, but just naturally I became suspicious. What was this Arab camping on my trail for? To me there seemed only one answer. Wheeler must have talked. Thought I, the son-of-a-gun will come nosing over here in half an hour. I'd better get it over and know what I'm doing at any rate.

"Say here, Wheeler," I said. "Frankly I'll be almighty glad if we have a straight talk."

"We've had several, haven't we?" he retorted.

"Not on your life! Now what's this Arab doing skulking jackal style behind us?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I do. You must have talked. Is that right?"

"Talked! Haven't said a word!"

"Maybe not directly," said I. "Now look here, play the game. Did you or did you not tell him that we were out for Tom's find?"

"You told him yourself that we were going to follow Tom's trail," retorted Wheeler. "Maybe he wants to find Perrinkle to get that Koran back!"

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "then if he knows about the Koran he knows what's inside it. You must have told him."

"I've never said a word about the Koran. I may have said something about his crazy idea of finding diamonds as big as rocks."

"When?"

"Oh, before you barged in that first day. Wasn't my fault. How was I to know that he was the fellow? I've never said a word since."

"Of course, you —— fool! That's why the next day he came along with that fool yarn about the placer up the Lurio way, and you wanted to fall for it. Why, man, he knows Tom is no fool. If he could have tricked us into going northeast he'd have been free to follow this trail same as we're doing. Oh, my ——!"

"But he's got a perfect right to follow the same trail as we have and——"

"Oh, ——!" I snapped, turning away, "he's got a perfect right to go to —— and you too!"

I was mad. The man was that dangerous combination, half knave and half fool, the type most difficult to counter because you never know which is going to turn up, the fool or the knave.

However, Hafid didn't turn up, and I requested Wheeler to stay in camp, an order at which he scowled but obeyed.

The most irritating part was that of course the Arab had a right to follow on my trail—thanks to that idiot's wagging tongue. I couldn't order him away and neither by the look of his outfit was there any sense in working up a fight. I wished that I knew exactly how much the Arab did know. The most dangerous thing that I could see was that he might bribe or scare my men into deserting me.

All I could do was to keep my eyes skinned and trust nothing to Wheeler's romantic vision. At each camp I forbade any stranger to enter the *zareba*, but about the only one I could trust on that score was Kopman and I took pains to let everybody know that the dog was loose at night.

You can imagine what it was in a situation like that. I confess I began to be suspicious that Wheeler had made a secret bargain with the Arabs and that the row over the man who had tried to steal the rifle bolt was a frame-up to put me off the scent, but since then I don't think that was so; pretty sure it wasn't. But when your nerves get worked up, your judgment's apt to stray, and anyway many a man has gone to the chair on less evidence than that.

For a week we plugged along almost without incident. Sometimes Ali would camp near, at others he wouldn't turn up; but never did he make an attempt to call on us. All the time I was trying to work out a scheme to throw him off the scent; even considered going back on my tracks to see if he'd leave me, and then make a detour. But there were two things against that—one was that my provisions and ammunition weren't unlimited, and the porters might kick; and, secondly, he was just as capable, if not more so, of following up Tom's trail.

About two days after that, I think it was, Wheeler brought matters to a crisis. We had both been out shooting for the pot in different directions. When I came back he was sitting by the fire. There was something wrong I could see by his attitude. I noticed that his dog Oompie was not there and as I came up, said pleasantly—

"Hello, where's Oompie?"

He raised his head, glared at me, and rising to his feet, snarled—

"Shot the swine—and it's about time I did the same for you!"

"Say, here," said I, firing up, "you'd better take back those words."

"I won't. But I tell you what I will do. Take that rifle of yours and I'll take mine, and we'll fight it out at a hundred yards. Whoever comes off takes the kitty."

"'Re you crazy?"

"I'm not. But I'm fed up with you and your —— dog as well. You never liked me, and, by ——, I've no time for you. Things can't go on like this. You called me an old woman. No man'll do that!"

"Called you—called you—what?" I stammered, flabbergasted by the idiotic accusation.

"An old woman—back there in Quilimane—you've called me a fool a hundred times."

I stared at him, simply unable to grasp right off what on earth he was driving at. I thought for a second that he had gone insane, but he didn't look it—not more than usual.

"Old woman!" I repeated inanely.

The repetition seemed to infuriate him the more.

"That's what you said before and by ——, you'll pay for it now. Come on, you cur!"

He reached for his rifle lying against a camp-chair. Then it dawned on me that he was serious. I leaped and kicked the gun he was reaching for and stepped on it.

"Say, here, Wheeler," said I, "this is about the worst thing we could do with natives around, but you insist on it, and, by —— you'll get it. It's not a rifle you'll have but your hands."

And with that I threw my own rifle from me and smacked him across the face.

He was game all right, the more's the pity. He came for me like a wounded leopard. But I guess I've been in a few more rougher rough-and-tumbles than he had, and I was real mad. I realized, too, that I'd got to smash him badly or else he wouldn't know who was boss. I did. At the finish, because he insisted upon it, I was compelled to put him out.

I hated the whole performance, with the natives standing around watching. I'd have given anything to have avoided it, but— While he was recovering, I again indulged in idiotic hopes. Now, thought I, we've had it out, we'll be real pals.

No, sir. What he did, as soon as he was fit, was to come up and say:

"Look here, Harvie, will you accept that challenge with the rifles or not? One hundred yards to the death."

"You crazy boy," said I, more or less good-humoredly. "Haven't you had enough?"

"Will you, or not?"

"Sure I won't."

"You're frightened," he began.

"Say," I interrupted, "if you want another hiding, you'll get it and quickly."

"That isn't the point. You licked me, I'll admit, but I can't stop with you after——"

"Go to blazes!" I snapped, disgustedly.

"I'll not. I'll join the Arab over there rather than stay with you."

"Join who the —— you please," I retorted, turning on my heel, "only get out of my camp!"

He did too—within twenty minutes—merely taking blankets and rifle. As I saw him going I very nearly ran after him, wanting to cry, "Come back, and don't be an idiot," but I knew that it would have been of no use. And anyway I hadn't forgotten his wanton murder of his dog. One thing he had said had been true—that we couldn't have gone on like it. Of course the effect on the camp was bad. The natives couldn't understand either the fight between the two whites or the one going over to the Arab camp. In the evening I recollected that several weeks' wages were due to Wheeler, and with a few other things I could spare, sent them over to him. I thought he might refuse, but he didn't. My boy came back and said that the *bwana*, who was in the tent feeding with the Arab, had taken them without a word. Although I really regretted the affair, I did feel more comfortable that night. Kind of peaceful without that sulky face mooning about, liable to blow up at any moment sort of feeling. A possibility I thought of but dismissed, as I didn't reckon he was yellow anyway, was that he might plot with the Arab to get me out of the way.

Next morning, when I broke camp, to my astonishment there was no sign of Hafid and my late partner moving. Probably, I reflected, that silly young fool's so haughty that he just can't bear to march within sight of me, or possibly he's come to his senses and realizes what a fool he's made of himself.

We were now coming to the end of the thickly populated district, and from the reports of the natives, faced a long trek through an uninhabited region, fairly dry and with no game. That night, Wheeler and Hafid didn't show up, so I had the local chief to myself. I heard that Tom had passed through this very village and found a man who would show me the trail for a day's march.

I tried to get him or another to come along as guide, but again came that reluctance, more pronounced, to traveling in that direction. Having noticed this before, I had throughout kept my men as much as possible away from contact with the local people, knowing too well that some superstition was often quite enough to start a panic of desertion.

Somehow I detected myself seeking an excuse to stop over a day to see whether Wheeler, on coming up, would make an overture, for the longer I thought about it, the less I liked the idea of a white in company with an Arab, particularly a hotheaded fool type such as Wheeler.

However, I marched only a couple of hours later than usual next morning, having seen no signs of the other caravan. That day I noted the mean direction of the trail, for all native paths wander almost around the compass. I found it to be north northwest by west and on that course I determined to stick.

THAT night I kept my ears open, and as I had half-feared, detected an uneasiness among the porters grouped about their fire, where was the local guide, due to return to his village on the morrow. I remained awake the whole of that night to keep an eye upon them. Even then, when daylight came, there were the four Kawambwi men missing, and the local native as well, in spite of the fact that he hadn't yet been paid. I sent my headman and a few whom I thought I could trust, to beat around in the long grass and scrub; but they only succeeded in bringing back one, who confessed that the guide had told him that the people on the other side were wicked and that the country was bewitched.

I herded 'em all together and gave 'em a lecture, a combination of threats and alleged proofs that my white medicine was stronger than anything that these wild people could possibly have. The Quilimane boys, being a little more sophisticated and impressed by the doings of the whites, with the aid of many presents promised their allegiance if they stuck it through. As they were all pretty well loaded up, and particularly as I needed to make good time, I had to abandon some more loads. However, I had some consolation in the hope that the panic would spread among the Kalambwi men who were with the Arab.

For five more days we made good going, seeing nothing at all except the interminable light timber-scrub, no game and scarcely a bird. The last village had reported variously upon the distance to the inhabited country, some saying six days and others twenty. Throughout I hadn't seen a sign of the Arab's *safari*, which almost made me wonder whether he had given up the chase. Naturally I often speculated as to how Wheeler was getting along with his new partner and what sort of terms he had made with him. Yet I couldn't help but feel relieved that he had gone.

The following day, I think it was, that I noticed that Kopman was doomed—the fly had gotten him, in spite of Harry's arsenic preventative. The staring coat and a slight discharge from the nostrils were sure symptoms. I pumped some more arsenic into him—when I had him bound and chained—but that would only hold him together, I knew, until the first rains or he got wet.

That same night we were camped in a slight clump of trees by a dry river-bed, from which water was obtainable by digging. I hadn't bothered to put up the tent and had my bed under a big thorn-tree. I dropped off to sleep earlier than usual, and waking from some sort of a dream, saw above me the enormous fangs of a monstrous jaw, shadowed by the moon on my mosquito net. For a moment I was paralyzed with terror. Then I recognized Kopman standing on the bed with his forepaws, yawning. I laughed at the fright I had had and patted him, at which he growled in his friendly manner.

After lying awake for some time, pondering about things, I heard him growling slightly again. But then he always grumbled if a boy moved to throw another log on the fire. I quieted him and dropped off to sleep. The next thing I knew was Kopman's bass roar mixed up with a shriek.

I scrambled out of bed, revolver in hand, and saw that the dog had some one down a few yards away. Yelling for my boy, I seized Kopman by the collar and with trouble dragged him away with his chops covered in blood. Just as I was thinking that the beast had made a fearful mistake, I caught in the moonlight the gleam of a dagger and the contour of the face of the man, a Somali, whose throat had been entirely torn out.

From whom he was a messenger I had no shadow of doubt. I knew also that although I hadn't seen him since the village that Hafid ben Ali must be camping somewhere upon my trail.

Naturally my thoughts turned to Wheeler—yet I was sure that he hadn't had any hand in such a dastardly attempt at murder. Then another idea flew into my head. If this Arab was so determined to remove me, why should he not be equally anxious to get rid of Wheeler?

The time was twenty minutes to four. The moon was due to set about five. Taking Kopman with me, my rifle and revolver, I set out on the back trail, determined to see Wheeler and demand explanations from the Arab. But as I reviewed the situation, I saw that I couldn't do anything. Probably Wheeler wouldn't know anything about the matter; the Arab would merely swear that the Somali didn't belong to him and I couldn't prove it. However, I walked on steadily until daylight, with never a sign of the Arab camp. The country was flat, with light timber and scrub, so that he might be camped within half a mile. On the other hand, he might be two days behind me and had sent on this murderer so that he'd be well out of the way in case the attempt failed. I swore and went back.

I FEEL more cheerful to-day and had a better night. I think scratching away at this all day is a relief. Lord, I'd give weight for weight in stones for tobacco! Old Singabulu came in this morning for a long chat; think he means well and would help me if he could. But do what I can I can't get any information out of him—just says nothing or starts talking about something else. He's very curious to know the manners and customs of whites in their own country; Somewhat difficult to explain for want of objects to liken things to. Appears the Monomatapa is getting better. Nothing was the matter I guess but overeating. Wish there would be and then I may get a chance—

Well, after the Somali episode I made my head-boy take it in turns with me to stand watch at night, four hours each. The more I worried about Wheeler the more I thought I ought to halt for a day; yet there was always the uncertainty of water ahead. I slugged along for another three days and then quite suddenly came upon a native path and signs of long abandoned fields, and then upon a small river, with permanent pools of water even in the dry season.

I camped there for thirty-six hours, to give the porters a needed rest, but Wheeler and Hafid did not show up. The day I spent in fossacking in that river-bed but nothing promising did I find. The next morning I saw smoke and within an hour we were approaching a village, which I saw at a glance belonged to a different tribe from the Kalambwi, for it was heavily stockaded and placed in a strategic point on a bend of the river.

Our coming seemed quite unexpected, for the women working in some outlying fields of rupoko, immediately set up the shrilling which is the sign of the approach of strangers, and took to the bush. Immediately, inside the village began a commotion. A drum began to tap out a message. In the customary manner I halted my *safari* and advanced with my head-boy carrying my stool behind me.

A hubbub arose as they saw us, and through the narrow gate stalked a tallish warrior, wearing a trade shirt, and armed with a spear and a Martini rifle. The fellow's carriage and build reminded me of the Zulu. At ten yards from me he halted and held up a hand, crying a greeting. I replied in the customary way, and after a short parley, he led me into the kraal and to the club-house in the center, about which were clustered some fifty warriors and many women. Seated on a mat was the chief, a wrinkled old fellow, evidently of great age.

The *shauri* proved most satisfactory, the chief expressing his pleasure at seeing a white man, offered me a hut, and intimated gently, that all strangers were expected to go straight to pay their respects to the Monomatapa—which was nothing out of the ordinary. I made him a few presents and then pitched my camp near the kraal. Scarcely had my men got busy than food and chickens' eggs, milk and calabashes of rupoko began to arrive on the heads of the women.

"Fine," I thought, as I smoked my pipe that night, feeling more than a trifle excited. "Seems a hospitable guy and sure I'll be glad to see the Monomatapa, as according to those papers of our French friend, that's where the stones are."

I wondered, too, whether Tom had come through this village or had struck the country at another point, but that I, for policy's sake, didn't dare ask until the morrow.

The first shock I got in the morning. Intending to stay there that day, I had taken the luxury of having my coffee in bed. While I was drinking it, I heard a terrific discussion going on outside. I called my boy, Gambazi, and asked what was on. He said he didn't know and would go and inquire. However, I slipped out myself to my table. I saw Gambazi talking to them and then they all turned and came in a body to me. Their headman calmly announced that they didn't wish to go any further. I asked why, but they immediately began to prevaricate, maintaining that the agreement had been as far as the next inhabited country. They were right; that had been the arrangement. I replied that they would have to wait until I had had a *shauri* with the chief about getting fresh men, and they went off grumbling.

However, much to my delight, the chief made no trouble at all about it, promising me as many men as I liked to take me to the capital. I asked him casually about Tom, but he said that he had never before had a white man at this particular village.

I went back to camp in great spirits and paid off my porters cheerfully. Lordy, I thought, if it's going to be as easy as this, probably Tom's just cleaned up what he wanted, sent a letter to Harry which never reached him, and went on to Nyassa and out that way home.

Wheeler and Hafid didn't show up that evening, and I began to wonder what could have happened to them. Possibly all their Kalambwi men had deserted, as had mine, and they had had to go back. That was quite feasible. Perhaps, too, that was the main motive of the attempt at murder—to stop me getting such a long start at all costs.

I had told the chief that I wished to start the next morning, and sure enough, with the sun came the number of porters required. They were not, I noticed, of the same tribe as the warriors, probably slaves, which would account for the Kalambwi's mens' terror of the Vealanga, as they called themselves.

The change in the country was abrupt. The timber grew thicker, a park-like country, open grass glades and thick clumps of big trees; and the population grew denser at every mile, mostly small villages but all close together, surrounded with fields, and swarming with life. At each village I was well received by the headman and always offered a hut, which I invariably refused on account of the usual inhabitants.

After the second day I noticed that the villages were no longer stockaded; only, I reckoned, the frontier ones, revealing, for a native tribe, some powerful government which eliminated any inter-tribal warfare so common in Africa.

For four days we followed the depression of the river and for two days more were traveling over undulating open country in which was much cattle, the small native kind of course. Once, I recollect, when drinking some warm milk straight from the cow, which I'm crazy about, I felt as if I were a bird of bad omen. For they seemed a peaceful, happy people and I knew well what would happen immediately these new diamond fields were known to the white world. I partially decided then and there that when I had had my fill, I would never reveal the place to anybody. Some one else would discover it in time anyway.

Then we struck the river again or rather I think another one, into which the other flows. It was bigger and had a slight flow of water as well as the deep permanent pools. This river I am sure must flow into Lake Nyassa. Three days later, after passing through a denser population than ever, we arrived at the kraal of the Monomatapa. As le Coq had, according to Tom, hinted in his diary, it was mighty big for this part of the world; contains, I reckon, fully two thousand huts, spread around the king's enclosure in the center.

I gathered from the warrior who had been my guide that I would be expected to occupy a large hut which, as was the custom of the king, was kept for the use of foreign guests. Fearing to wound his royal susceptibilities I accepted this time. Among the streets of huts, well-constructed somewhat after the beehive Zulu style, I noticed several oblong ones, speaking of Arab influence, belonging to notables.

The royal compound, containing, as I afterward found out, some four hundred huts and houses, was perched on a slight butte dominating the town, and the walls were of heavy stakes with fire-hardened spikes. As, with my rifle under my arm, Kopman at my heels, and Gambawi following with my stool at the van of my little safari, we passed through the gate, roughly fashioned of hippopotamus tusks bound with fiber and copper wire, into the compound, whom should I see, sitting in the shade of a hut than Hafid ben Ali.

"The swine!" I thought. "He must have made a detour by forced marches and gotten around and before me."

I walked straight up to him, with my gun handy, and greeted him curtly. He responded very civilly. Then I demanded:

"Where is the white man who was with you?"

"As Allah is great!" he returned quietly, meeting my eyes steadily, "he hath been taken by a lion the fourth night after he left thee."

A lion! I hadn't seen a trace of a lion in the whole country since the Qua Qua river valley on the coast. Yet what could I do? I daren't call him a liar and shoot him out of hand. Apart from the fact that I hadn't any proof, such an act here would have entailed trouble instantly. I turned on my heel and walked on without a word. "Poor ——," I thought, "he certainly paid mighty heavily for his crack-brained temper."

DREAMING about you, old man, last night. Seemed we were in New York having a high time on the Madison roof, and all of a sudden Singubulu and Kopman walked in. Nobody seemed at all surprized, and then somehow, as in dreams, you disappeared, and sitting there all dolled up, was the Monomatapa. I've been looking over le Coq and Murchison's diaries again. Does me good somehow to know we aren't alone. Gregarious animal, man, eh?

The guest chamber turned out to be quite a decent hut, with a compound to itself. Even was there a charpoy—bed frame made of crossed reims—for Gambazi to sling my blankets on. "Sure!" thought I, "this fellow's no piker!" It was well that I had some considerable Oriental training, for a fellow has to have a well-developed streak of patience in dealing with such folk, and to sit there for the three days demanded by the infernal etiquette—pinched from the Arabs by the way—while there was a young Kimberley, as I imagined, sitting on its hams around the corner, yipping for me, and not show a ruffled hair of anxiety, took some doing.

The first annoyance was that I had to stop in my own abode like a prisoner, not being allowed to wander even around the town until the Lord of Water Elephants—Monomatapa—had duly given me leave. All the time, too, I was tortured by wondering what that darned murdering Arab was up to. Of course I speculated a lot about Tom, but I was fairly satisfied that he had long ago cleared out with a nice load.

An old man with a gray mossy tuft of beard, called Singubulu, who was master of ceremonies I afterward discovered, looked after me, superintending the women who brought food, chickens and so on, and politely asking my wishes, none of which could be granted, except relating to such food as they had.

On the first and second nights, there was a —— of a hubbub going on around me in the king's quarters; drums going and some kind of stringed instruments, and the usual howling and chanting, which was, Singubulu informed me, the last of the marriage celebrations of one of the Monomatapa's numerous sons.

In the afternoon, I saw from my open door, Hafid ben Ali passing, evidently going up for an audience. He saw me all right though he pretended not to. Anyway, I can sleep peacefully, for with Kopman by my bedside, he's not likely to try to pull off any more murder.

It occurred to me that he couldn't possibly have arrived very long before me, so I wondered why he, too, wasn't in a guest house. I asked Singubulu and learned that an Arab is not treated like a white man. The idea rather flattered my vanity and I thought that I would probably be able to do more with the Monomatapa than he could.

On the morning of the fourth day, old Singubulu routed me out at sunrise to go see the king's minister or *katikiro*, as he is called in Uganda. Inside the great compound are other enclosures, one within the other. I was led to the second from the interior one, in which I could remark the largest house I had yet seen in the town, oblong in shape, which I reckoned must be the royal residence.

The minister I found seated on a carved wooden stool beneath a large tree, surrounded by quite two hundred chiefs and courtiers I supposed, mostly dressed in skins and feathers. He was a huge, powerful man, in the prime of life, inclined to a belly, very black and more negroid than the men about him. He was wearing a dirty white robe and a filthy Fez cap and on his large wrists were bangles of iv——

Singubulu interrupted me. After a long palaver about nothing, he wanted to know whether I would let him have a small piece of my hair. I couldn't see any harm in giving it to him. Then I suddenly thought that I ought to make him pay for it by giving me some information. I told him that if he'd tell me what had become of Wheeler and the others, he could shave my head if he liked. Nothing doing, although the temptation was big I could see. All this took about two hours of *shauri*. However I've found something that he dearly wants. The utter inability to get anything out of them, the torturing uncertainty gave me an awful fit of depression again. I shall be mighty glad when—well, when I do know something at any rate.

Well, the first minister accepted my presents and my statement that I had come to visit his country with a grunt and a sniffing cough. He has some kind of asthmatical affection. I went on with the usual preamble of compliments and the rest of it. In return, he explained to me very earnestly, backed by grunts from his warriors, what an extremely important person he is, ruler over uncounted men from his sacred person to the sea, but that he was delighted to have a white man, of whom he had heard so much, come to visit him.

Of course I was burning to start negotiations for permission to explore the river-bed, but etiquette and custom forbade any such attempt at a first interview. However, I presently mentioned that I had had a friend who had set out to visit him some twenty moons ago, to which he replied that he had never seen him.

This gave me a shock. What! I thought, Tom never got here. What could have happened to him? Perhaps, after all, this wasn't the right place—and my heart sank. Yet possibly he had turned aside and gone off somewhere else, although that wasn't like him in the least. Maybe he had fallen sick and——

But I daren't reveal any surprize and turned the topic to a mild request for permission to see the town, to which I was given a grunted assent.

After I had taken leave I was followed by a man carrying a tusk of ivory and a calabash. I couldn't think what the calabash could contain and dared not look until I was alone in my guest chamber.

Honest to ——, at first I thought I had gone insane and then I nearly swooned—for there were seven stones as big as pigeon's eggs, diamonds beyond question!

Man, have you ever held in your hands a fortune beyond your wildest dreams? Not a possibility but an actual fact—indisputable. As I sat there on the bed, holding those seven dull pebbles, such ordinary looking pebbles to the lay eye, that a man would have kicked them aside. I think I became hysterical. My imagination went crazy. I saw the mater and sis with a palace on Fifth Avenue and a place at Bar Harbor, the old family estates in Georgia brought back, regardless of price.

I was the owner of a thousand-ton full-rigged yacht with auxiliary steam, to continue wandering about the earth. If I'd had a girl I should have probably suffocated her in diamond pendants as big as walnuts. I know that I laughed so much that Kopman growled at me.

What insatiable greed a man has! It never even occurred to me to be content with that handful of kings' ransoms. I steadily set in to get more drunk on the possibilities that the river-bed would yield. How to wait until the morrow for the interview with the king I didn't know. I recollected, of course, all the most favorable extracts in Tom's letter of the Jesuits' reports, the diamonds as big as pigeons' eggs! And holy smoke, wasn't it true?

What had happened to Tom disturbed me little in my orgy of greed. I took it for granted that as he hadn't been here at all, as the minister of Monomatapa had said, that he had foolishly gone off on some other venture. Never mind, he could have fifty per cent. of what I got for having put me on to this Solomon's treasure.

I laughed again at the naïveté of this black potentate, giving away enough wealth to buy his own kingdom several times over; seemed a shame in a way, like taking candy from a child, or worse, as this child didn't even know that it was candy at all.

I thought of poor Wheeler, too, and called him a fool again in my intoxication, for having been so childishly silly as to quarrel with me. Lord, hadn't I used the restraint of a saint? Hadn't he provoked me beyond endurance? Darn shame, the poor kid! Anyway, I'd see that his folks, if I could find them, should have what would have been his share.

Oh, what a pig man is! Immediately, I confess, I began to hedge; for I saw that if I went fifty with Tom and twenty-five per cent. to Wheeler's folk, only twenty-five would remain to me and that seemed mighty unfair. Solemnly I reduced Tom's share to twenty-five and Wheeler's to ten, and all this on the supposition that I was going to dig at least a sackful of diamonds, as big as the ones I had in the calabash, from the river.

On the top of that came another panic. What was that swine of an Arab doing? Had the Monomatapa given him such a present? Singubulu's statement that Arabs were not treated as whites comforted me. But I had visions of the fellow down on the river, busy with pick and shovel and sluice; could see his excited eyes, as he picked out the great pebbles.

Well, with such idiotic dreams I tortured myself all through that sleepless night. Morning came and with it I had to fight to keep the glitter of greed out of my eyes. Not to miss any melodramatic act, to keep up the native ignorance of value, I scattered the diamonds in a corner by the overturned calabash, as if they weren't worth looking at a second time.

Singubulu nearly drove me crazy by not turning up until nigh ten o'clock. I swear I was sick with anxiety and excitement. After the usual maddening preliminaries, he mentioned that on the morrow I could perhaps be able to see the Monomatapa himself. I think that I considered myself the greatest diplomat the world had ever seen when I retorted that there was no hurry, perhaps the day after would suit His Majesty better.

Oh, the torture! However, I was free to wander around the village and suggested that he should accompany me. As soon as he had assented I was stricken with fear for my diamonds lying scattered on the floor. Some one might steal them! Hafid ben Ali might have the nerve to call and lift them of course. Yet I couldn't gather them up and put them in my pockets before Singubulu. After an agonizing moment I solved the problem by tying Kopman in the same corner, adding what I conceived to be a master stroke by kicking the pebbles behind him.

On the whole of that stroll through the town I was just aching to edge toward the river just for the sake even of a glance to see what it looked like; but I knew that I was only permitted to walk within the confines of the walls or small fence which ran round the outskirts. As we passed the street by which I had entered, I noticed that the house where I had spoken to Hafid ben Ali was deserted. The deuce, thought I, with a pang, he's busy hard at work down in the river-bed, and refrained from asking Singubulu for fear of allying myself in their minds with the Arab's ambitions.

However, I did manage to see the river from one portion of the town built on a slight cliff, and was rewarded merely by the sight of a deep pool of water, where the only thing I could see was a couple of hippo asleep in the shallows opposite.

Throughout the walk I was naturally regarded with considerable curiosity by the women and children, although the few warriors and notables I encountered evidently deemed it beneath their dignity to be astonished or to show any interest. As we passed along the palisade of stakes I noticed, stuck on the spikes over a door made of the tusks of the hippopotamus, some half a dozen human heads. As I drew near, I was surprized by the amount of hair for a negro, and then gave a gasp of surprize, for they were the heads of Hafid ben Ali and his men!

For a moment the ghastly objects gave me a shock, and I couldn't resist asking Singubulu what he had done to be so honored.

"He is an Arab!" replied Singubulu, simply.

Thank the Lord they don't treat Arabs as white men, I reflected, recollecting Singubulu's information, but all the same I walked home to my hut in a much quieter mood.

BEEN down with a dose of fever for six days. Luckily I still have quinin—although don't quite see what it matters anyway. Singubulu wanted me to have some herb concoction the natives use and I took it. Don't know what it is but it surely makes you sweat some. Feel rather shaky and despondent in consequence.

Sitting in the guest-hut, after meeting the heads of Hafid ben Ali and his men, I grew kind of reflective for a bit. If Hafid had murdered Wheeler, as I suspected, he had surely been revenged. I tried to figure out the whyfor of it, but couldn't find any satisfactory conclusion except that the Arabs might have wiped out a bunch of this tribe at some time or other, and they had continued a death feud against them. But then if that had been the case, Hafid would have known and not strolled up with such a small *safari*. Another alternative was that the slaughter had been committed at the whim of a savage despot. The fact made me recollect the strangulation of the three Jesuits in 1561. I became still more reflective.

Yet the prospect of vast wealth, nay, vast wealth lying actually in your two hands, is a powerful tonic, and I began to grow optimistic before nightfall. 1561 was a long, long time ago, and in those days whites were not so uncomfortably close. Nowadays, even such an independent chief would surely think twice before outraging a white, and as Singubulu had said, they treated white men differently.

A horrid suspicion that perhaps Tom had been murdered was soon eliminated by what seemed an obvious fact; if they had been murdering anybody lately, their skulls would surely still be on the stakes of the enclosure, for by such I knew the Africans put much store and prestige. After all that wasn't enough to spoil my sleep, and now there was no fear of a Somali trying to knife me, and Hafid wasn't digging my diamonds, which was some comfort anyway.

The next morning I went for a stroll on my own around the village. Nobody molested me, and as before seemed to avoid looking at me. I noticed that every time I appeared near an outlet from the village, there were several armed warriors within a few yards. Might have been coincidence, but I was mighty sure it wasn't. I couldn't refrain from some morbid curiosity from passing by the royal gate which was festooned with heads. They were just stuck roughly on each spike, which was black with clotted blood, and as I looked I started, for the second on the left bore a startling resemblance to the Somali whom Kopman had killed. Of course it couldn't have been that man, but might probably have been a brother.

The following morning, Singubulu turned up and informed me that the Monomatapa would receive me in "grand audience." I didn't quite make out what he meant by the phrase, and he explained that that meant "in the Sacred House upon the hill," which I took to mean the big hut I had remarked within the innermost enclosure. Then he hinted that it was not etiquette to carry arms with me. I didn't like that, you bet—particularly with the recollection of Hafid and company's heads decorating the gate through which I would pass.

I pretended to acquiesce and slipped my revolver in my shirt, and as I had already locked up my stones in my steel box, to which I tied Kopman, I announced that I was ready. Singubulu conducted me up through the compound as far as the same enclosure where I had been before, which was as far as I could see empty, except for the huts and houses. Then, leading to the right, he urged me into a large hut, which was hung with charms of various kinds.

I jibbed, demanding to know whether the Monomatapa was inside. Singubulu replied that he wasn't, but that before seeing him within the Sacred House on the hill, I would have to be disenchanted. Now I didn't know very much about native superstitions, but I had run against the frequent one of the devils that are supposed to be attached to whites and strangers generally, and usually even before entering a country they will have some sort of a ceremony, either squirting some mess on you or killing a cock and burying it or something of that sort, so that I wasn't very much surprized, thinking that it was the ordinary nonsense.

Inside the hut was very dark, foul, and full of an acrid smell from a fire in the center, around which I could dimly make out the forms of some dozen men, dressed up in feathers on their heads, evidently witch-doctors, who were chanting in a scarcely audible voice. I was made to sit down on a mat right in the draft of the smoke, which made my eyes smart and caught my throat. Singubulu, squatting beside me, whispered to my dismay that I must open my shirt so that a magic potion might be rubbed on my throat. I thought of my gun and contracted my belly muscles as I obeyed, to let it slip as far down as possible.

The door was shut and we were almost in darkness, save for the glow of the fire. They went on chanting for some time, and I coughing and wiping my eyes. Suddenly a figure arose and began to yell incantations. Some one threw some stuff on the fire, which crackled and emitted clouds of bitter smoke which stung my eyes and brought on a furious fit of coughing.

Then I felt something hot and sticky thrust upon my wind-pipe. More smoke poured in my face. I felt suffocating, but tried hard to stick it out. The fumes died down and I made out the vague figures around the fire chanting their heads off. And how they stank! I don't know how much longer it was, but I know I was conscious of the fleas getting busy before Singubulu whispered to me to rise. Then, as I gladly did so, I clutched at my shirt. My revolver had gone!

It was only by a great effort of control that I didn't begin hitting out right and left, but I instantly knew the futility of such a course. The man who'd taken the gun would be out of that dark hole like a cat if he wasn't already. I swore to myself and stalked out without a word, knowing that my only chance was to pretend that I didn't know it.

As I stood blinking in the glare, Singubulu urged me toward the next gate. I obeyed, trying swiftly to work out what the game could be. Evidently, I argued, it couldn't be that they wanted to murder me, for they could have done that a dozen times. Seemed to me that the thief had been either some enterprising witch-doctor, who had taken the opportunity to get a good bang stick with six voices, or else it was a regular polite way of protecting royalty.

The next gate was practically the same as the first, but with higher and heavier stakes. Inside that I passed between two quite large houses, oblong, and apparently built of sun-dried bricks, each having a large and long veranda. Some fifty yards beyond were two big trees, between which we walked, and came upon a magnificent fence composed of elephant tusks with their points turned inward to my surprize, as usually they were employed the other way as a protection against storming. Immediately outside this gate, constructed, only more elaborately, of hippopotamus tusks, was a tiny oblong hut, but three feet high, with doors of tusks too.

As I passed through I admit I glanced about uncomfortably to see whether there were any more decorations in the form of skulls. But there was none, to my relief. Within, and standing alone, in a space some thirty yards in diameter, which was the crown of the butte, was a large hut with ivory doors, the exact replica of the tiny one without, which I then recognized as the devil-house, provided on the principle that if you don't entertain his satanic majesty he will come into your own house, the inference being that the said devil is fortunately so stupid that he doesn't know the difference between a real house and a doll's.

To my surprize, the place seemed deserted. Singubulu led the way toward the large hut. I followed and entered, expecting to see the Monomatapa seated within, probably with some of the doctors or nobles.

The interior was very dark. As I blinked, a scuffle of feet caused me to wheel and rush out of the door in time to see Singubulu bolt through the gate like a rabbit into its hole. Suspecting treachery and on the impulse keenly aware that now I was unarmed, I raced after him.

On the threshold of that gate in the ivory palisade I was brought up by young women standing with their long bladed spears presented like a solid phalanx of Roman soldiery.

As far as I recollect, I stood and stared like an idiot at those women. Young they were, all of them; muscular and well-made; nude, save for jackal-skins from the waist, and their woolly hair was dressed into a cone. At first I couldn't grasp the fact—I mean that they were women balled me up entirely. Their spears were long and ugly and they evidently meant business. As I stepped back to reconsider, a drum broke out just below and a screaming yell, followed by a continuous chant. The women stood there, six of them, like statues.

I looked around at the ivory fence and then I understood why all the points were turned inward. To vault over them was impossible; to climb them would be some job, and meanwhile you could be speared as easily as sticking a fork in a pie.

I walked boldly up to the entrance again and made as if to walk through. Instantly the three women leaders jabbed within an inch of my body. I suppose we are so biased by our point of view that I could scarcely understand that they would injure me; for they were women. But that workmanlike stab reassured me on that point. I stepped back and quickly. Then I realized why the revolver had been stolen. I walked slowly around the enclosure of ivory tusks, with the points turned inward, and as I did so I noticed that two of the armed Amazons accompanied me on the other side of the fence. There was no other outlet. I was trapped. But why? For what?

I sat down in the shade of the hut veranda and stared perplexedly at the one entrance. Just without, three of the women squatted on their haunches, half-balancing on the haft of their spears. I tried to solve the mystery of what was intended but could not arrive at any satisfactory solution. The first thought had been that they were going to hack off my head as they had done Hafid's and his men's, but then I had seen him going up from his house in the village only a few hours before his execution. Yet there was time for that, I recollected uneasily, for the sun was high.

When something really dangerous threatens sometimes you feel curiously calm; almost indifferent. I did then. I had an illusion that I was thinking things over very quietly. Women, I kept on repeating. But why women soldiers? Were they going to cut off my head that afternoon or not? That was the most pressing question. Unarmed, what could I do? I blamed myself bitterly for consenting to leave my rifle behind and allow my gun to be stolen. But then, had I had it, I reflected, they would have probably knocked me on the head or speared me right away.

Then said I, what am I going to do? Obviously stop where I was. Women or no, I wouldn't have a dog's chance of passing through those savage females unarmed. The drumming and chanting was still going on. To celebrate my capture, I supposed. I looked vaguely at the hut, which seemed well constructed and to be kept in good repair. I got up and walked around it and found another door on the other side. From there you could see the roofs of the whole town, the fields, the deep pool of the river, and the forest beyond. Glancing down I noted another darned female figure squatting outside the ivory fence, watching me through the interstices.

I walked inside the hut. The interior was large and lofty. On the floor were native woven grass mats. As my eyes became accustomed to the shade, I remarked a number of objects around the walls. Then I started. Among them I had first recognised my own steel dispatch box and suitcase, and upon it the calabash, containing my seven stones! Beside these things was every article of mine, with the exception of my rifles. They must have speared Kopman as soon as I had left. I sat down on my own trunk, bewildered, trying to solve the puzzle. Staring round I got another shock.

Alongside the wall was a long steel uniform case, much battered, that I knew well; I scarcely had need to glance at the half-erased initials T. P. to know that it had belonged to Tom. The panic of fear that seized me at the sight was confirmed as I saw beyond his helmet, khaki breeches and leggings and all his clothes, down even to his darned socks. In a swift glance I noticed that his were not the only things. The hut was like a lost property office.

My hands were trembling as I opened Tom's box where, on the top, as if hastily thrown in, I found his diary, which seizing, I almost ran out on to the veranda to read.

WHERE I interpolate that part of Tom Perrinkle's diary, dating from his departure from Kalambwi's kraal.

Feb. 15.

Martin's runner came in today. The

blighter won't come along as I thought. —— his eyes. Dear old Mahmud left three days ago. I was torn between laughing and apologising when he went, for he's quite a sportsman in his way. I almost suspected that he'd spotted something when he happened to ask whether I had found the copy —of the Koran—interesting. Of course I said, "Yes," bless his heart. Still he'd do me for every cent I had had he half a chance, but all the same I suppose I'll send him a decent commission out of what I find. Tried to get a few extra boys from Kalambwi, but the old scoundrel hummed and haa'd and finally promised, but none turned up. Says he will send for some, but I won't wait as I can get along fairly well without them. Extraordinary sunset, green, purple and gold, unusual in dry season.

Feb. 21.

Belt of Kalambwi's people finishes here. Reports say anything from seven to twenty days to people of the Monomatapa, who they say is wicked, which on closer investigation appears to mean given to slave-raiding. Going carefully through le Coq's diary I see that he quotes some one as saying that the Monomatapa once ruled as far south as the Çuamba, the Zambezi evidently. From his description of their physique and customs, they seem to be an offshoot of the Zulu; possibly an earlier immigration than the Agoni and the Matabele. Interesting. Been studying his crude map. He came up on the dom's trail, but I think that I can't be far wrong in calculation and must certainly strike his trail if not the Monomatapa people, who can't even now be so small that you couldn't hit 'em.

Feb. 25.

Beastly going; monotonous scrub and ragged timber; very bad water. Porters getting fed up. So would I be if I didn't know there was something at the end. If it turns out trumps and a quarter as good as Le Coq makes out I'll have more than enough to fit out the South American trip. If it isn't, I think I'll chuck up Africa all the same—for a while anyhow. But still I feel in my bones that there will be something there; enough to run home; have some hunting and give Kitty a surprize. Quaint how a man can't leave a woman alone! She certainly didn't play cricket with me, but yet I'd—oh lord, probably if I met her I'd be cured: would see she's got old or something. Still I'd take the risk. What a —— fool a man is! And what bosh a man writes —in Africa!

Feb. 27

Scrub giving more to timber. Tempted to spend a day fossacking in what looked like auriferous reef. Looks like striking a river soon. Porters fairly done in and I have driven 'em a bit not knowing how long this patch would last. Still the beggars have done more than this in their lives. My favorite pipe got plugged and that —— fool of a Martin forgot to include cleaners. Haven't got any wire so I'll have to try grass which always breaks. —— business.

Feb. 28.

Came on old plantations three hours after sunrise and very soon struck a kraal fortified; noticed that type of warrior corroborates my Zulu theory. Formation of spear and battle-ax confirms. Chief young and rather cheeky, but apparently obliging. Speaks a curious Makalange dialect but with most obvious traces of the Zulu click in it. Have a distinct class of slaves evidently recruited from surrounding tribes and using a distinct dialect in consequence. There's a spruit here but typically waterless, save for pools in dry season but no signs of likely blue or yellow ground. Sewn with granite outcrops and ordinary quartz which hold up the water for the pools. Forgot to note that this is undoubtedly the people of the Monomatapa.

Chief gave me amusing lecture, recounting that the Monomatapa was ruler over uncounted warriors from his sacred person to the Çuamba and the sea, and contemptuously asked me how many soldiers my king had. Bless his little heart, it will be a sad day for him when he finds out, and if what Le Coq says is true I'm afraid it will be jolly soon. However, he promised the extra porters required and they turned up on time, too. That confounded pipe blocked again. —— Martin!

March 2.

Soil rich and fertile here, heavier growth of trees; thickly populated. This is undoubtedly the district as described by Le Coq. Much agriculture and cattle but observe all work done by slaves, the warrior class and their women neither working nor apparently intermarrying with the subject race. Slight promises of auriferous outcrops here but no time to prospect, and besides don't wish yet to let them have an idea that I'm after minerals. One hopeful sign is that they all deny having seen a white, which probably means that none have heen here since Le Coq's time, and anyway he came in from the lake, following the dom's trail.

March 13.

Monomatapa's kraal. Arrived on the tenth day. Biggest kraal I've ever seen among the Bantu; population must be somewhere about twenty thousand, counting women and slaves. Very hospitable. Have guest-house well made and kept. Old man, one Singubulu, detailed to look after me; kind of master of ceremonies, I presume, after the Baganda model. Town built on bend of river, which must flow into Lake Nyassa. Running water and deep pools, although I have as yet only glimpsed it from the town. Can't say it looks promising, but there may be pans near by which Le Coq described as sewn with stones like the altar of Notre Dame de Paris. Good for his shade may he be correct! Must have been hard luck to peg out of fever just as the dom did apparently. Doesn't appear a particularly malarial country either.

March 18.

Saw the Monomatapa's headman today. Big brute of a fellow, looks almost pure Zulu; much more so than the Agoni. Gave him the usual presents and never had such a shock in my life for in return he gave me a tusk of ivory and a calabash containing seven almost flawless stones and each one as big as a walnut—each one a small fortune. No fuss about it at all. Apparently haven't the slightest idea of the value. I examined them cursorily and asked if he had more like them to trade and was told that I could have as many as I liked. Don't understand it. Seems uncanny. If they have no value to them, why should they give them as presents? Some white must have taught them that white men like them. Le Coq? That might be a feasible explanation. Sitting here in the guest-hut I feel almost scared—new for me—at having fortune thrust into my hands in this effortless manner. Good job I'm not superstitious.

March 20.

The mystery of the diamonds is explained. I'm a prisoner, but apparently kept for some ju-ju practise, whether cannibalism or not I can't find out.

It began two days after my visit to the prime minister. During the night my revolver was stolen. The following morning Singubulu came to take me to see the Monomatapa himself, but I was not allowed to go armed and couldn't possibly conceal a rifle. They put me through the usual witch-doctor disenchanting and led me to a lone hut within a palisade of ivory tusks and suddenly left me alone. On trying to get out I was met by a guard of Amazons, who I learn from Murchison—cold-blooded brute—are the king's official wives and sacred. This is the way that Le Coq went out unless he died of fever before they got him here, and the other man Murchison as well as the dom, for in this ju-ju house are all their effects apparently on the customary principle as applied to kings and sacred bodies generally that all their belongings are possessed by powerful magic. True, none of their or my guns are here, but they may combine, as they often do, common sense with religion, and keep them in a special house. I have no weapon of any sort except a hunting-knife but am fashioning a kind of dagger out of a hippo tooth, of which the doors are made. The fate of the Jesuits haunts me.

March 21.

The drums have started in full blast. I think Murchison's speculations are right, for this is the end of the second quarter of the moon and tomorrow night will be the full of the Autumnal equinox. I have made every attempt to get away but those beastly women are there night and day. It's a —— way to go out. Wish I hadn't read Murchison's diary, which makes me feel more uncomfortable than ever. Well, I've warmed both hands before the fire of life, as some one said—was it Fielding?—but I'm —— if I'm ready to depart—not *à la* Jesuit anyway. If worse comes to the worst, I suppose I'll contribute these notes to this strange library of the dead.

(written hurriedly in pencil)

March 22.

Screaming, yelling, howling! They're coming. *Vale!*

(Brandon Harvie's diary continued)

Guess any man would feel bad when he hears of his best pal's death and receives a death sentence at the same time. I sat for a long time with that worn little book in my hand, staring out into the dancing heat upon the river.

What I thought I don't know; seemed stupefied. Kind of suffocating feeling as if you were enclosed in a small box, yes already, or in a coffin. Yet how had he died? *À la* Jesuit? That was not by any means sure. Fighting? How would I die? The date I knew was about March tenth, eleven or twelve more days to live.

I was disturbed by a woman's voice calling from the entrance. Some calabashes had been placed just within the gate and she bade me eat. Eat! Ugh!

I fell to thinking again. The drums were still throbbing away. But somehow my brain wouldn't work. I could see flutters of pictures of the murder of Tom and then ourselves. But the other man of whom Tom had written? I went inside, found another steel uniform case and in it carefully packed besides books of notes, one bound in vellum marked, Diary. "Sir John Pratte Murchison," which I took out on to the veranda.

(Extracts from diary of Murchison)

May 15.

Ujiji—Heard most interesting account from Major Albrecht the political officer here. Appears genuine and a splendid case of totemism, the hippopotamus being the symbol; also of the most complete system of divine autocracy of which I have ever heard. The Monomatapa, Lord of Water Elephants, derived from the totem, as the ruler is styled, once entered into office, is said to disappear from mortal ken inasmuch as he becomes a hippopotamus who lives in a sacred pool by the river, and yet possesses some hundred official wives, who are soldiers, and whose duty it is to guard the sacred dwelling. The inconsistency of the account is very typical of the native mind.

It is said that at a special feast, at the Autumnal equinox, the king is seen by his subjects, seated on his throne in the palace and is actually a hippopotamus talking in the tongue of man. Of course there must be some jugglery about this on the part of the priests.

Albrecht informs me that by repute, centuries ago, this Monomatapa ruled over an enormous kingdom extending from as far north as here and as far south as the Zambesi, but that now it has dwindled by the incursions of the whites to a relatively small area in Portuguese East Africa. It is supposed to be situated about Lat: 12, Long: 35. No white had yet visited this extraordinary relic. Whether the people are exogamous as totemic tribes usually are, Albrecht had no reliable information. This extremely interesting account he obtained from a chief in one of the most southern districts in their territory.

I have fully determined to visit this strange monarch. In any case it will not interfere greatly with my schedule, for I can return either across Lake Nyassa or round the north end and so on to Bangweolo. The opportunity is certainly irresistible. Albrecht will loan me a boat as far as the southern end of Tanganyika.

Bagaka. June 10.

Evidently this Monomatapa has an unsavory reputation, as I find it utterly impossible to obtain canoes here to land my expedition on the eastern shore of Lake Nyassa within five days' paddle, such as I have estimated to be about Lat: 12. Probably this is due to fear of being taken as slaves. No doubt this undiscovered tribe, who are still independent of the Portuguese, retain their old-time customs in the matter of slavery and other practises. This will indeed make them far more interesting, giving one a rare opportunity of studying the native uninfluenced by civilization.

June 17.

Have been here a week. Excessively annoying, but at last have discovered a way to avoid the land journey by buying the canoes outright. I can at all events depend upon the Wanyamwezi not to be influenced by the local natives, for they have both respect for their German masters and a stronger belief in the what they call magic of the white man. The rock formation here is curious. Paleozoic——

June 20.

Another three days wasted. Quite irritating. Even my Wanyamwezi, in whom I had such faith, proved restless. They protested at first that they couldn't paddle but as they come from the lake-shore district I knew this to be an impudent lie. However, after much bother and giving of extravagant presents and promises of more largesse, they have consented. My six Sudanese askaris and personal servants fortunately are impervious to the ideas of these savages, as they so amusingly call them. We start tomorrow morning.

It suddenly occurred to me today that I may better have gone to Bangeolo first, and then across to Nyassa, as then I should arrive at about time to witness the feast at the Autumnal equinox. I am rather annoyed with myself for this flagrant stupidity, as the fête must be most interesting indeed.

Kavabi's, Lake Nyassa, June 28.

We have been paddling six days, camping at night on the foreshore. Today we arrived at this village. Instead of, as I had imagined from the alarming reports that my boys brought me, finding a hostile people, they appear very friendly indeed.

Unfortunately no one in the village speaks Kiswahil and I am compelled to use Mohammed and I suspect that he is very much at sea with this dialect. The Wanyamwezi understand perfectly, but to have two interpreters is excessively annoying. However, there is no help for it. The chief *via* Malinko and Mohammed corroborates the report that as yet no white has visited Monomatapa. He is very polite, places a hut at my disposal and even offers to provide canoes and paddlers. This is most unusual——

My rebellious Wanyamwezi have come in a body and asked me to accept this offer as soon as they learned of it from their fellows, and request that they may be allowed to wait for me at Bagaka's at the head of the lake, maintaining that these people will be glad to paddle me back. Am disgusted with their cowardice. But as the chief, Kavabi, is willing so to do, I have accepted their suggestion. Even then they had the impertinence to demand the promised presents! I can not persuade or buy my Wanyamwezi assistant interpreter to come. He will not leave his brothers. Most irritating.

They are quite a well-made people, the men stalwart and the women very pleasing, particularly the young. Extremely black; far more so than the natives farther north. They have as I suspect an inferior race in bondage; are smaller and less stockily built. As far as I can gather through this irritating double interpretation they do not intermarry. Other questions regarding exogamy I shall leave until I am at the Monomatapa's where probably I will find some one who can speak Kiswahili.

July 10.

Traveled by river all the way to within a few miles of the Monomatapa's although a great number of rapids necessitated much porterage. Just below the town the river spread out into a vast lake, a dry pan at this time of the year, full of pebbles, lying on and embedded in a bluey clay— On the washouts I noticed, too, a curious bluish green serpentinous rock— The village is very large and contains— Very hospitable. Keep a guest-hut. In this case it is really commodious and fairly clean. My men quartered in the compound.

Have to wait three days, the prescribed time, according to etiquette. One, Singubulu, a man about forty I should imagine, is detailed to look after me. Have tried to get details of customs out of him but he seems very obtuse and it is very hard and exhausting work through Mohammed, who really is an irritating fool. No one here speaks Kiswahili. I shall stay long enough to learn something of the language.

July 13.

Just been to visit the prime minister, a young and powerful negro. Gave him the usual presents. I had understood from Mohammed that I was to see the Monomatapa, but I presume the idiot misunderstood. However, this young man promised that I should within a day or two. On leaving, he gave as presents a huge ivory tusk and a calabash. I have just been examining the contents of that calabash. There are seven pebbles, mostly in the form of an octahedron, about two inches in diameter. Although I am not sure I really believe they are diamonds. Really will be most interesting if they should prove to be, and if so, apparently the natives have no idea of the value. Yet why should they give them to me? More possibly connected with some idea of magic.

Have never known Mohammed so irritatingly stupid. He says he has overheard men talking and that they intend to murder him. I said I supposed he meant "us." But no, he insisted "himself" only. He has muddled things again or else he has suddenly acquired a gift of tongues. But he is nearly insane with fright. I am going for a walk alone around the village.

July 17.

The most extraordinarily interesting thing has happened. Mohammed was right. He is dead, and all my men. I am a prisoner.

On my walk I noticed that armed men kept constantly near me although nobody seemed to have enough curiosity to stare. As I was returning along the palisade around the king's compound, I saw eight heads upon the spikes, and as I approached to my indignant astonishment, I recognized them as those of Mohammed, my personal servant, a Somali, and the six askaris. They were so freshly murdered that the blood dripped upon my walking-stick as I stood by them.

I looked around angrily, but beyond some few women about their domestic business and children, there was nobody; that is, within sight. Furious with this cold-blooded treachery, I hastened to my hut where I was lodged, to find it completely sacked; not an article remained. Now fortunately although I have a service revolver, I never carry it, always finding that a gun excites opposition and that a walking-stick, as Livingstone considered, was invariably sufficient. However, not having the divine confidence of that great missionary, I carry an automatic in my trouser pocket in case of unforseen violence. I was glad of that now.

Just as I was turning to seek some one in authority, the man Singubulu came along. I asked him sharply in Kiswahili what was the meaning of the outrage. Evidently he didn't understand a word but he pointed up the hill to the king's quarters. I assented vigorously, understanding that he meant me to appeal to the king or the minister. Still very angry, for apparently they meant no ill toward me, I permitted him to lead me. We passed through two enclosures, one within the other, and stopped at the door of a large hut with a low roof. He beckoned me to enter. Thinking that the king or the minister was there I did so.

A pungent smoke caught me by the throat as I stooped. Around a fire were some eight men chanting softly, and as I stood peering through the gloom, wondering what was intended, the man Singubulu spoke to me, pointing upward as if meaning something higher and then into the pot.

I understood immediately, for knowing the very familiar custom of disenchantment, I interpreted it evidently meant that I was to see the mysterious Monomatapa himself—for of course I didn't believe him to be a hippopotamus.

So I assented and they placed some hot resinous compound on my throat. I was still very angry indeed, but knew well that I could not enforce my indignation upon them except through their chief. Therefore I followed again, walking-stick in hand, as Singubulu urged me up the hill. The next enclosure was composed of many houses, well built. Then we came to a marvelous stockade, composed of ivory tusks. In the center was a solitary house. This I took to be the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Monomatapa, and confess that in spite of the serious matter in hand I was really thrilled. I walked in, expecting to see I knew not what— The hut, save for native mats, and, to my astonishment, my own kit, was absolutely empty.

I turned. The man, Singubulu, had disappeared. I walked out. The compound was also empty. I stood and pondered what was to happen. Then I saw standing in the one entrance women armed with spears. Dear me, I recollect reflecting, they must be the Amazons guarding the sacred—what? I stopped, for there was nothing in the enclosure except—myself.

I was sacred, obviously they were there to guard me. I walked down to the gate slowly. Immediately six of them presented their long spears at me—young women too. I spoke to them, but they did not understand. I smiled. And they smiled back. I made as if to pass through them but they thrust forward their spears in a most dangerous manner. I still had my automatic in my pocket, but they were women, and such strapping wenches! Besides no one seems to wish to harm me. I couldn't bring back the murdered men. I had an idea, a most interesting idea. I walked back thoughtfully to the hut——

July 20.

Besides my own effects I have discovered the habits of three monks, Jesuits, their underclothes, rosaries and crucifixes. The material is in such a state that they must be very old indeed, possibly centuries. They are evidently regarded as fetishes, which corroborates my theory.

After much reflection I have decided that either they consider me some form of a god and will endeavor to keep me here for life on the principle that where the god is they will benefit by his power, or they may have some system of annual sacrifice connected with the idea of the dying god who is resurrected in the Spring, but this does not seem so likely here in the tropics, where there is so little difference in the climate. On the other hand, the sacrifice may be one derived from that in remote ages and as recorded in South America and other parts of Africa, of killing the god and burying his members in various parts of the kingdom in order that the crops may be reinvigorated.

The motive for the slaughter of Mohammed and the Somalis I can not conceive. Does not appear to have any relation to a religious rite. Possibly the Arabs have been their raiders in times past. However, as this is July, and the Autumnal equinox is somewhere from the 21st to the 25th of March, I shall have some seven months or more in which to study the subject.

Singubulu has made advances and on the assurance that I will not attack him with my stick, appears to wish to be friendly. I shall endeavor to see this curious ceremony unless my actual life is threatened, when with the aid of my automatic, I shall do my utmost to escape. More I can not do. But first of all I must use every effort to master this dialect. I am to be well fed apparently and as, fortunately, I do not smoke, I shall want for little. I sincerely hope that I may be spared to obtain some details of anthropological value.

(Continuation of Brandon Harvie)

I READ as far as that and then I stopped—for the time. That fellow surely had some nerve the way he took it. I sat on for a long time, I guess, just browsing on what I'd taken in and trying to figure it out. Automatic or no, I reflected afterward it hadn't done him much good, although he might have had the poor satisfaction of taking some of them with him. After all, what could he have done? He couldn't fight his way with a gun through a whole tribe, not like this mob at any rate. And, lord, he had seven months to wait and think about it. Just as he studied the lingo and tried to pump old Singubulu for secrets to pass the time, so am I writing you this. If you get one you get the other. His gun made me think of Tom's ivory dagger. Didn't seem much use about making one, yet—I don't know. I'm with Tom. I'd rather go out scrapping than sheep fashion.

Queer how Le Coq's Koran got away from here for all his other gear's here. But it ends, as Tom said, on a remark about fever and before he'd gotten caught in this monkey trap. Guess it must have been stolen before.

Afterward I went back and finished Murchison's diary. Just as he reckoned he'd do, he did. He'd learned the dialect mighty quick and as you'll see, it's full of legends and stuff about superstitions, right to the end. Doesn't scarcely say a word about worrying over it. Great stuff his farewell: 'Good-by! Tomorrow I'll be a dead god or a man alive!'

March 25.

Nothing has happened yet. Wheeler *wasn't* killed by a lion. I heard his voice when they were yelling their heads off and I thought they were coming for me. They're still yelling and the drums are going like mad.

April 10.

I've been ill. Nervous breakdown I reckon. I was all worked up to face whatever was going to happen and nothing happened, and I think the shock—seems funny —knocked me off my balance, or maybe malaria at the same time. But I *did* hear Wheeler's voice. That was before I got sick, when they were yelling, and I was expecting them to make a rush for me. The performance was in the next courtyard below me. I distinctly heard Wheeler's shout in English, 'God help me, I'll—'and the sentence ended in a shriek. Then there were three more screams and the last one sounded muffled as if a sack or something had been thrown over his head. It was Wheeler's voice, of that I'm dead sure.

They kept up the drums and yelling for two more days every hour of which I expected them to rush for me. The strain made me ill, I couldn't eat and sat there with the ivory dagger in my hand bracing my muscles at every howl until I ached from head to foot. Then I kind of petered out, as far as I can make out, for I have only vague recollections of Singubulu around me and of his making me swallow some concoctions. I still feel groggy and jumpy. But I can't figure out what is going to happen, why they didn't come for me as they seem to have done with Tom and the other fellows. They must have massacred Wheeler somehow. If only I knew.

January 13, 1913.

I haven't been able to look at this diary for nearly twelve months. I wonder whether you will ever see it, Charles, whether this library of the dead will be added to by other fellows? Sometimes I feel hopeful—even of looking you up and spinning the yarn personally. Who knows? But that's only sometimes. I'm feeling particularly good just now, and that's why I've got the pluck to write again. After that jolt last year when poor Wheeler went out and I went a bit off my rocker, the very sight of this made me—yes, I'll tell the truth, made me want to blub like a kid.

I'd better explain, I guess, in case I shan't have the chance to. But I musn't think about that——

After I pulled myself together last year I wasted a lot of time cussing and prowling about my yard here like a bear in the zoo. I wouldn't or couldn't eat, got mighty thin until even old Singubulu got worried about it. Made me think that they were cannibals. Then, following Murchison's plan, I started in to learn the lingo thoroughly and also to read his diary, Tom's and Le Coq's, with the hope of getting a tip of some sort. Lordy, I read 'em over and over until I pretty nearly knew 'em by heart, but I couldn't seem to strike any idea that might prove useful. I'd get pessimistic and ask myself why I should be able to figure out a way when the Murchison fellow couldn't, who was a much cleverer guy than I am, and knew heaps more about the native.

Then one afternoon in the rainy season when I had the blues, staring dismally at the Amazons' outfit next door, I got a real brain wave. I had been gloomily trying to work out how they had killed poor Wheeler and recalled his oath and then the strangled scream. That word "strangled" recalled part of the story of the old Jesuits who, the record stated, had been strangled in 1561 and then instantly I got up and hunted in Murchison's diary again for a passage about native superstitions in which he had said something about them never spilling the blood of a chief or a god, which accounted for the method adopted by the Monomatapa.

Still that didn't seem to get me much forrarder. Then browsing over the passage again I came across another entry about native superstitions in which he went on to say that "usually these victims representing the gods are so sacred that no man or woman's eye may rest upon them, nor their sacrifice be performed except by the holy priests." Farther on he says that among the Bawemba—whoever they are—upon the death of the god depended the safety of the tribe. "Should indeed," he remarks, "such an unprecedented accident occur as the escape of the representative god then would the sky fall upon the ground, the cattle would be destroyed, the crop fail, and ruin and desolation descend upon the people."

Linking all this together I got the great idea. For it seemed to me, as evidently I was reckoned a god or the representative of a god, that could I get out of the sacred enclosure none except the priests or Amazons would dare to touch me; in fact would bolt for their lives.

I chewed on that idea for weeks and the more I picked up the lingo the more I could get out of Singubulu—not that he told, but by piecing together scraps—and I got my wits sharpened some. I decided that there was something in it, at any rate a sporting chance and my only one. But the trouble was how to get outside the sacred enclosure, at least, if not the village?

The idea warmed me up more than a lot, believe me. Among other wild schemes to get out of the trap I had thought of the obvious one of tunneling beneath the ivory palisade, but had abandoned that, thinking that they would surely get me, if not in the village, in the countryside. Now I reconsidered it and made a careful examination of the butte. Fortunately it wasn't hard rock, but shale with veins of soft sandstone. The ivory knife poor Tom had made would serve as a tool. It would be a mighty tough job, but I reckoned I had until next March to do it.

Another point was how to prevent old Singubulu poking his nose in, for I dare only attempt it in the hut where I could hide the earth and stuff from the hole. My only solution to that was to pretend to be an eccentric god and refuse to have him in my hut.

My wits began to work like a greased wheel. I thought up a scheme to interest him in white magic, told him that I was about to carry out big medicine in the hut, and that nobody would be allowed to enter, for if they did the magic would be killed and the person injured. He quite got that, kind of appealed to him I think; and he seemed to have more respect for me, on the principle, I suppose, as Murchison suggests, that the more powerful the god the more prosperous in war and peace the people.

Well, that's my little hope, old man, and I've been working like a son-of-a-gun every night—after trying Singubulu out for a week—ever since. I thanked my stars for those veins of sandstone, otherwise I'd have had no means of shoring the tunnel shaft. Some —— of a job and my hands are rags. I've got the tunnel now, I calculate, some thirty feet beyond the nearest Amazon hut, and as they always at night patrol or rather squat close alongside the ivory fence, I reckon I can snake out of that enclosure without being spotted. In the village at night no one budges an inch for fear of spirits. The Amazons, Singubulu tells me, have extra special charms and are holy anyway. I've got to be a lively spirit that night! Once out, if my theory is O.K., I follow the river, pinch the first canoe way below the rapids, and make for Lake Nyassa along the route Murchison came up.

Writing this bucks me a —— of a lot. Feel as if I'm drinking cocktails with you again, old man! I'm taking the seven diamonds with me, but I guess my greed's a bit cured, for I'm not for stopping to hunt in the river-bed for the sackfuls I was after!

Still already I've an idea to hunt you up and we'll both start a real expedition to come back here and rescue the dead man's library besides the trimmings!

February 22.

I'm through! Tonight there's no moon and I make the attempt about nine when they've most gone to bed. The diamonds are in my pocket and I have still the worn ivory dagger. Everything else I'll have to leave. I've tried to bluff old Singubulu that for reasons of magic I mustn't eat or drink for three days and that no one must enter the compound. He seems very impressed and if he falls for it, it will give me an extra chance to get away some distance down-river. *Au revoir*, old man! Feel bucked at the idea of doing something anyway.

End of Brandon Harvie's diary.

I met Brandon Harvie's sister in hospital garb in Paris in 1917. When I inquired for dear old Bran, she replied gravely:

"Don't you know? He fell in his first action with the Foreign Legion last year."

LA BRIGADA DE SAN PATRICIO

by Frank H. Huston

THE average American in his youth has read and thrilled over the exploits of the Irish Brigade at Fontenoy and of the later glory won by that of the same designation in the Union army during the War between the States, but how many have even heard of the Brigada de San Patricio of the Mexican War?

Just prior to the opening of the war, one Riley, a non-commissioned officer of the Second U. S. Infantry, deserted and made his way across the border and, at the time Scott assumed command of the American forces, was appointed by Santa Anna a major in the Mexican forces. He commanded a force made up of deserters from the "gringos," the larger part of whom were from the Third and Fourth Infantry, and all Milesians.

At the battle of Contreras and when the fight at Cherubusco took place, the Brigada Irlandes, or as they themselves preferred to be known, St. Patrick's Brigade, occupied the Church of San Pablo. The fight they put up elicited the admiration of the storming party, headed by Lieut. Alexander, later a general in the Army of the Confederate States of America, but not sufficiently so to prevent the victors from incontinently bayoneting or shooting their former comrades on entering the defenses.

In mopping up, some twenty-five or thirty, including Riley, were taken prisoner, nine being later released by order of Gen. Scott without reasons being given for the act of clemency. In the case of Riley, it was ruled that, having deserted before the war began, he was not amenable to the death penalty; but after being flogged and branded on the hand he was turned loose, while the remaining deserters were hanged upon a single tree at a cross-road half-way between San Angel and Tacubaya. (See Report, Scott, War Dept., Action at Contreras, etc.) and 1st Ohio Inf.

A HUNDRED AND SIXTY—FENCED

by Henry Herbert Knibbs

IT'S plow and harrow and irrigate;
It's collar and hame and trace;
And I've strung the fence that I used to hate,
And I've made me a tidy place.

I'm straddlin' furrows and cussin' stock,
And my gun is on the shelf;
I feel like I'm workin' to catch the clock,
And just turnin' around myself.

My saddle hangs in the corral shed,
And my spurs are brown with rust:
I reckon I might as well be dead,
For there ain't a bronc to bust.

I miss the boots that I used to wear;
They were boots that were made to fit;
And I miss the feelin' of bein' there
When my cayuse fought the bit.

And I miss the feel of not knowin' how
A tangle would pop and break;
Instead of cuttin' out cattle now,
I'm carvin' the family steak.

A hundred and sixty, fenced and neat.
I call it my home corral,
But I'm somewhere else from my head to feet,
At the sound of a pack-horse bell.

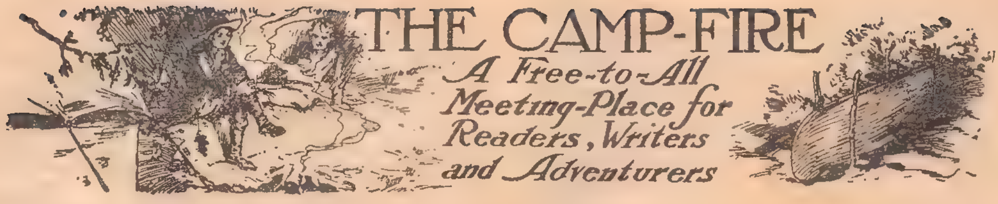
A hundred and sixty holdin' me!
Why, the desert kinda smiles,
Thinkin' of when this range was free
A hundred and sixty miles!

But when night comes creepin' to the door,
And my missus lights the lamp,
When my kid is playin' on the floor
That the shack is a Injun camp,

When the owl hoots like he had no friends,
And my thoughts go ramblin' back,
Why I'm kinda glad that the old trail ends,
Right here, at my little shack.

THE CAMP-FIRE

A Free-to-All Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers



Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

HERE is an appeal received in March for the American Indian. Like most other Americans, I do not know the facts of his general present condition. I know only that in some cases he lives on the fat of the land, in others leads a miserable existence. I know, too, that we can not escape the fact that we have taken away from him the land that was once all his, and I believe that an unprejudiced examination of history will show that in justice, good-faith and kindness our record is not so good as his.

With one thing in the letter I fully sympathize. We are being called on to help the suffering people of a long list of nations, of Christian, Jewish, Greek and Mohammedan faith or of no faith at all. Well and good, but charity begins at home. There are plenty of Americans, white and black as well as red, who are suffering. And, having them here with us, we have far better opportunity of finding out to what extent their need is real and deserving. If we're going to help people, we'd better help our own first, foreigners afterward. Particularly if we ourselves are responsible for the suffering of those among us.

As I say, I do not know the facts of the Indian's general present condition and am ashamed that I do not. Our Camp-Fire space is sadly limited, but can't we find a little space in it for some brief facts on the Indian's condition from those who have the facts?

East Saugus,
Lynn, Mass.

Will you, in some way, aid just a little in trying to give the present-day American Indian a chance and some of the rights, which, before God, are his due?

THE pitiable plight of the Blackfeet this Winter is a burning shame. Congress at Washington would sit and unwind red-tape and let them starve. The U. S. A., who is called upon to feed and clothe half needy Europe, to say nothing of establishing missions for the Patagonian and Hottentot, is very gravely responsible when it neglects to protect and in some way provide for its wards the American Indian.

I believe now is a psychological time to develop a kindly helpful attitude among right-thinking Americans, and the opportunity is presenting itself to help the Indian to help himself. To provide industry and occupation for him, thus he shall retain his self-respect and become a good citizen.

In my opinion we have in the past bitterly wronged the red race. Shall we not make what amends we may? Neglect or injustice toward them to-day has no shadow of excuse, and is a stain on the honor of our name.

I am an American of old New England stock, born in Paris, Maine, and living since marriage in Lynn. I am acquainted with some of the Maine Indians, visited their camps this Summer at Plymouth.

Our soldiers say the Indians did splendid work in the World War. Did the red man not prove his forgiveness, his patriotism and loyalty? He was exempt from draft but he *volunteered*, knowing he could receive neither pension or bonus.

It is my opinion that the American people will rise and *demand* fair treatment and different conditions for the Indian race when they realize the truth about them and understand them better.—JENNIE B. DUNHAM.

SOMETHING from Charles Beadle concerning the facts back of his complete novelette in this issue:

Ile de Lerne, France.

The mechanism of this yarn—not the story—was suggested by Poe's 'MS Found in a Bottle.' I wanted to develop that and work out other methods of getting over a communication from a man or men tied up in a hopeless knot which was bound to lead to the final dive.

THE inner yarns on which the plot, if you like, is founded are historical, the strangulation of the priests by the Monomatapa, a chief who did reign over an empire as told in the story. The center of his kingdom was in ancient times in the Mazoc valley, Southern Rhodesia, and his lineal descendant is now called Mudojumbo and he lives on the Urania. I've met him in Police days and he it was who was responsible for nearly all the Mashona Rebellions.

The dogs Kopman and Oompie I had on an exploring trip with me. When passing the Zambesi I had to leave one behind because of the fly and regulations, and when I returned, I found the beast madder than ever, stuck on an island in the middle of the river because the Boer with whom I had left him was scared to death of him. Also the *Wheeler* in this story is drawn from the life of a man once on safari with me, the incident of Oompie following Kopman outside and the threat to shoot me and afterward the fantastic challenge to a duel at a hundred yards with elephant guns! Yet that chap was one of the best—in civilization. Afterward, off safari, we were great pals, but never again as a partner on the trail, thanks!—CHARLES BEADLE.

A LETTER that came back in the Winter and, like so many others, had to wait its turn. It comes from behind prison bars to us in the free outdoors, but I don't believe there are any of us little enough and weak enough in fellowship not to let this comrade come outside in spirit and welcome him at our blaze. There are quite a few of us behind bars, most of them no doubt justly there, but they haven't necessarily quit being human on that account and I hope we haven't. Also, they'll measure up fairly well with a good many on our side of the bars. Personally, I'd a whole lot rather shake hands with a thief in a striped suit or with most other kinds of crook than with certain Congressmen and other public officials and professional politicians. Maybe the crooks are just as bad, but they haven't done nearly so much harm with their brand of crookedness.

When I speak out about the evils and rottenness in our country don't any one get the idea I think it is a rotten country. It's because it's such a —— fine country that it's worth while fighting against what evils there are in it. And since I'm back on this subject that is so close to my heart I want to cry out once more "For God's sake stop immigration!" Not by a brief temporary law that is being constantly evaded or violated, but by a law sufficiently drastic and sufficiently enforced to give America time to recover her identity under the flood of aliens that is robbing us of it. For their sakes as well as ours. They like American institutions and conditions well enough to leave other countries to come here. They may be fully as good as we are, but they are *not Americans*. If America is to remain America, it is Americans, of native stock or already here sufficiently long to be at least partly Americanized, who alone can keep it so. And to do it, we'll have to be real Americans instead of the lukewarm ones we've been in the past except for military service.

Waupun, Wisconsin.

Just a word from the shadows. From a "city of silent men." Am just going to edge a little closer to the fire, boys. You see, I've been sitting back here in the shadows listening and sort o' dreaming, watching the little fantom flames leap and play while the smoke crept safely up into the night air, and droning voice after droning voice seeped through my dreaming consciousness with tales of wonderful places and wonderful men—since the fire was first lighted away back in 1912, and being completely happy and all serene. Knowing that, though silent, I was welcome around the little blaze where meet the best bunch of good fellows in the world.

I HAVE met dozens of them, in far places and near cities and jungles, mountains and deserts, and they all assay high. Big minded, big hearted, and big handed and clean. He-men and women of the great out-o'-doors. And I know. But somehow tonight a chill seems to creep upon me and, though I don't know how I'll be accepted, I want to sit a little closer to the crackling blaze and try to dispel this chill of loneliness which seems to grip me of late by telling some one who understands the call and comfort of greatness and space and solitude of far places just out beyond.

There are those who say I am bad. I make no excuse. 'Tis a poor sport who carries a bag of alibis. But I never had a buddy who would say it. And it gives me a warm choky feeling when I think of the true-blue pals who have shared my blankets and bacon and smokes. One of them left with his head in my lap, our last cigaret between his lips and a smile upon his face. It must have been for me, for I was the only one there to see. Another is married and has a beautiful boy, while a third is I know not where. But I know he thinks well of me. And if this is printed I know he will understand should he read it when I say that we, like Allan Dunn's *Brett*, were cast up. Only on the mainland and with a handful of wet matches and a knife (which I broke) in Winter in a northern clime. Mr. Dunn expresses the hardships wonderfully well, but—well, as they say, it has to be seen to be appreciated. Have been a writer for some time myself and know how hard it is to picture some situation in words.

SHALL write some day of hopes and despair; loves, hates and life as I am seeing them now. This when I can get before a machine and with room enough to turn around without putting the chair under the bed.

However, will cease for fear this may bore you trying to make it out. I am rather a cramped writer and my pen is poor and ink muddy. I do little better when all is favorable.

I feel much better. This has done me a world of good and whether you see fit to print it or not, I shall feel I have sat a little closer to the fire and none have made more room than was necessary. I can not write all details as they are known and as they are, and as I said before I make no alibis.

Here's good luck and happiness to all the boys and girls of Camp-Fire and a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.—FRED A. BURKE.

P. S. Burke is not my real name. But I know it isn't the name that counts. This name of Burke conceals nothing—PRINCE BOB.

A LETTER concerning Americans in the Boer War and the question of whether they were discriminated against:

New York.

In the issue of Feb. 20, I came across a letter bearing on the controversy "Are Americans discriminated against?" signed by Fred Royal, Pittsburg, and ably replied to by Captain Franklin. The writer is a veteran of the Boer War and was employed as a scout from October 22, 1899, until peace was signed, during which period he came in contact with "all sorts and conditions of men" on both sides of the "Argument," having traveled Cape Colony, the then South African Republic, the Orange Free State, Zululand, Basutoland, Bechuanaland and southern Rhodesia.

IRREGULAR corps were conspicuously sprinkled with Americans, particularly Strathcona's Horse, a Canadian contingent, and the writer was intimate with several of them. Strathcona's Horse was almost typically American cow-puncher and R. N. W. M. P., as the northern part of this continent could furnish, and they were mighty popular with the British regulars. I am not greatly acquainted with what may have or did happen so far from "the front" as in a concentration camp, but this I do know, that American recruiting agents were busy among the garrisons of occupied towns, trying to obtain seasoned men for the P. I. Do you suppose that the British Officials were blind to this? The writer was offered $100 bonus, a suit of civilian clothes, a traveling-bag (camouflage stuff) and was assured he would be gotten safely aboard ship. This was common knowledge among the British troops; may it not have had some little to do with "discriminating against Americans?" I tell you for what it is worth. I don't know, my stay in such towns as Cape Town, Durban, etc., being limited to the transfer from ship to train and *vice versa* until the conclusion of the war.

BUT we were not altogether blind as to what was going on in bases and concentration camps and the like, to say nothing of the lines of communication.

Occasionally K. of K. found it expedient to visit such places and "clean up" and in the process I'll make a bet he encountered more or less rubbish of various races—S. Africa was always considered good pasture for adventurers of every type. Remember Jack ——, who, with a couple of cans of condensed milk vaccinated a considerable number of Boers against small-pox and reaped quite a harvest before he was found out? Remember Jem Holloway of ex-pug fame or notoriety, the famous dynamiter of bridges on the Boer side? I met his wife in Pretoria in June, 1900. Remember—but what's the use? One could keep up the list almost indefinitely, what I want to point out is that where the fighting was going on there was no discriminating against Americans but every one was proud to fight shoulder to shoulder with them. On the Boer side I met as many English, Scotch and Irish as any other race except the true Boer of mixed Holland and French Huguenot descent. 'Twas a peculiar war, anyhow, with friends opposed to each other, and well—nuffsed!—PHIL HOLLOWAY.

SOMETHING more about scalping, from J. Allan Dunn of our writers' brigade:

I have been hunting up authenticities concerning scalping by Indians. Scalping by machinery in the mills of this vicinity—Berkshire Hills—is common enough as in all factory communities. Results are very seldom fatal because of the adequacy of first aid and subsequent treatment. I think it may be accepted that the chief reasons for the high degree of mortality among scalped victims of Indian wars and raids were septic conditions, shock and neglect.

THE scalping-knife was reeking with poison in the shape of toxic germs. The shock of the torn scalp, jerked loose from the rest of the skin where the blade traced the outline of the crude circle, the horror of the attack, were followed by exposure to the weather, often to the sun, of an unclean, open wound that was almost certain to suppurate if other wounds did not prove merciful.

What we are after in Camp-Fire seems to be proof that people scalped by Indians actually survived. I have personally seen two people who exhibited scars they claimed were the results of scalping and it is sure that these had been in conflict with Indians in their earlier days. I knew an old hunter named Flegel, in Routt County, Colorado, twenty-eight years ago, who was scalped by a bear in a hand-to-hand tussle.

This was vouched for by eye witnesses. The "b'ar" tore his ribs raw—his side looked like a piece of skinned meat—clawed off a section of his hair and left the scalp flap hanging over his eyes. Flegel recovered.

There have been writers who described a man with a perfectly bald head as one scalped by Indians, with some vague idea that the redman deliberately squatted down and flayed the head of his victim entire. Judging by scalps I have seen trophied by tribes I should say the average bit of skin was the size of a silver dollar.

BUT to my facts: The first is taken from the carefully kept diary of one Julia Perkins, grandmother of Harland Hoge Ballard of Pittsfield, Mass., Curator of the Crane Museum, Librarian of the Athenæum, founder of the Agassiz Association. There is no question as to the validity of the record. Mr. Ballard allows me to use the names. Julia Perkins, afterward Mrs. Captain David Pratt, writes:

"Father had gone to the Territory of Ohio. The Indians are fierce, wily and barbarous. In their wild, native dress, with necklaces of rattles from the rattlesnake, tufts of gay birds' feathers nodding about their heads, their faces marked and painted in every imaginable way, there is not much in their appearance to suggest the word friendly.

He was riding along through dense woods, after nightfall, when he heard the terrible war-whoop. War had broken out between the Indians and the whites. Father could not see any light nor even judge the direction of the whoops and the screams that followed. To go ahead might mean certain death. So he dismounted, tied his horse, wrapped his cloak about him and remained where he was until daylight. A short distance on his road he found an empty cabin.

The whole of its inmates had been murdered, even the tiny infant's bruised body was lying at the foot of the walnut tree at the door, covered with its blood. The Indians had left, supposing all dead. But, in a fence corner, near the walnut tree, was a young girl in whom father thought he discovered signs of life. She was about fourteen and she had been scalped, like all the rest. Lifting her carefully he bore her on to the nearest home. He dressed her wounds carefully and she recovered to live many years."

THE next is the case of Bathsheba Janes, connection of the Punkett and Hull families of Berkshire County, the facts personally known to certain of them now living. The records of these well-known families have been carefully preserved, having many notables among them. It is not mere hearsay gossip, increased in every generation by vague detail. Again I am permitted to use names.

This raid happened in Massachusetts. Several were killed before rescuers arrived and, following hard on the trail of the Indians, found Bathsheba Janes, who was a young wife about to become a mother, lying covered with blood in the hot sun. Uncertain whether she still lived, feeling sure she would not survive, a cloak was thrown over her.

On their return they found her alive and treatments restored her. Her grandchildren remember that, years afterward, she had a continuous trouble with her scalp where a crust formed upon the ancient knife-wound and had to be kept covered with cloths dampened with water and medicaments.

IN BOTH these cases surgery—such as it was—gave fairly prompt aid. In the second case the flies were kept away by the cloak. In the first case the girl was found in the cool air of the morning. The only point I am attempting to make is that even Indian scalping was not necessarily fatal under favorable circumstances.—J. ALLAN DUNN.

A LETTER from Bill Adams of our writers' brigade. As he says, the world's a small place.

I notice in the Feb. 20th issue, in letter from Fred Royal, Pittsburg, the name of S. S. *Induna.*

That Maltese stevedore of whom he speaks was an acquaintance of mine. I was an officer in the Rennie line steamers to which *Induna* belonged. She was the dinky coaster tootling up and down from Durban to the Heaven-forgotten dumps along the coast farther up.

My favorite amusement used to be watching the cattlemen from New Orleans reviling the authorities who forbade them going ashore from the *Cestrian*, a big steamer directly astern of us.

However—the world's a small place. S'long.—BILL.

HOW many, many times and for how many years I've been attacked, assailed, abused, cussed and ridiculed for the custom of using 2-em dashes instead of cuss-words in our magazine! Sometimes, of course, others of you commend the habit, but more speak up on the other side. That means a majority vote against the custom. It is, I think, the one point on which I've not followed the ruling of a majority vote from you readers.

In this case I'm too thoroughly convinced they're wrong. Also, while the majority of votes cast are against the dashes, there has been no regular vote. I doubt whether even a regular vote would show the majority opinion of readers. You see, the type who oppose the dashes are, generally speaking, the type who are more likely to write letters or to cast votes; the less strenuous type who prefer the dashes are a type less likely, on the whole, to come forward with their opinions.

But my stubborn stand on the dashes is, frankly, due chiefly to my stubborn belief that they are the right and the best solution of the question. I've never stated my side of the case to Camp-Fire, because I know in advance that it will not convince most of the objectors. I believe in my case just the same. But I ought to have stated it before.

FIRST, let's clear away the poppycock. Some of you account for the dashes on the theory that I'm a mealy-mouthed Miss Nancy with a righteous horror of naughty words. The use of dashes in the magazine is purely an editorial, not a personal matter, but since these objectors involve my personal attitude toward cussing, I'll state briefly that I swear like a pirate on occasion and more or less habitually, am sorry that I do and consider it rather a silly habit that too often becomes a disgusting one. On the other hand, there are times when nothing else seems to reach the spot, and there are times when cussing has very practical value as a safety-valve. I am unable to attach much weight to it either way as to moral values; to me there is nothing inherently wicked or sacrilegious in ordinary cussing as actually cussed. When Mr. Jones God damns Mr. Smith not once in ten thousand times does Mr. Jones really have anywhere in even his most remote thoughts any idea of actually asking God to damn Mr. Smith. The words are merely the expression of what may be called extreme disapproval. In the rare cases when Mr. Jones does really mean any such request in its literal sense, the question of what formula of words he uses is of no importance—he's let himself get possessed of a devil and has pretty well damned himself in the sight of God by so hating his fellow. His feelings are damnable, his words in themselves of little importance.

Now don't start to argue. I'm not defending my position nor even greatly interested in it myself. I'm merely stating it, so that the facts will remove this Miss Nancy idea.

THE only phase of cussing on which I have any strong feeling is this: A cuss-word means anything from nothing to hate at one extreme and affection or admiration at the other. What is a cuss-word, or any other word, in itself? It is the feeling back of it that counts. And the effect on the people addressed. I give warning that if any of you open up on me with righteous reproof for my leniency toward cussing, I'll have only one answer for you—"Search your own heart for all the perfectly proper words you've used in your lifetime that have hurt or injured the men, women and children with whom you have come into contact. Contemplate them awhile and then decide whether you're in a position to criticize other people." If you can show me a clean slate in this matter—and how many can?—I'll admit that I consider swearing an evil on the whole, chiefly through its indirect effects on the swearer himself but also through leading others, by example, into doing themselves the same kind of injury.

WELL, then, why use dashes in our magazine? There are lots of arguments against using the dashes and most of them are good arguments. I admit all this. As proof that I see this side of the case I ask you to remember that in editing *Romance* at the same time as *Adventure* I did not use dashes in that magazine. But *Adventure* is a different matter.

Why not, say some, omit cuss-words altogether, using neither the words nor dashes to represent them? Because we could not then even approximate reality in giving the real speech that many characters in our stories would use in real life. The absence of cussing would be rather ridiculous, and certainly untrue to fact. The use of such substitutes as "darn," "dog-goned," etc., is even sillier, though of course these words, too, are used in real life and therefore have their place in fiction under certain circumstances, but not as unreal substitutes for stronger words.

In the case of most magazines I believe in using cuss-words, not dashes or weak substitutes. (Not, of course, in using them for any purpose but realism.) But *Adventure* is a case pretty much by itself. For three reasons:

FIRST, our stories deal for the most part with men leading rough and ready lives. Such men generally express themselves forcibly. Result, our stories, if they are to approximate real life, are going to be more than usually full of cuss-words, real or indicated. From the mere point of number, the question is a far more serious one for us than, say, for *Everybody's*, in whose stories a large part of the characters are such as do not cuss to any extent in real life, or for *Romance*, or for the *Delineator* whose stories have a minimum of cussing characters.

Many a time we here in the office have got together and tried to work out some other solution than the present one. Each time we've failed to convince ourselves that the present plan isn't the best. Each time the number and variety of occasions for cuss-words in this particular magazine are one of the things that baffle us.

For example, suppose we print in full such words as "hell," "devil," "damn" and even "God damn." All right, but how about *the* fighting word and a hundred others that are just as natural to many characters, have an equal right, on a basis of realism, to be printed in full, yet are, many of them, too foul and coarse for any sane man to advocate printing in full or to be allowed to go through the mail if they *were* printed? The worst of these, of course, we do not even indicate by dashes, but there is a middle class, like "bastard" and *the* word, that the post-office passes in other magazines and would in ours but that, in such quantity as we use, would make our pages as a whole most unlovely and disgusting. Print in full "damn", etc. and use dashes for these others? That would be, in such circumstances, as bad as printing them, for, with the "damns" printed, any dash must on the face of it inescapably mean something definitely much worse—middle-class or lowest class, but nothing so respectable as "damn," etc.

SECOND, our magazine is naturally enough considered by all who are not familiar with its real contents "one of those cheap fiction magazines of bloody and sensational stories" that cater to the rough-and-tough element. In their eyes its very name settles that question and brands it as one of the worst of the class. You who read it and know it, feel resentment over this attitude and don't like it any better than I do. We want these people who condemn it sight unseen to take a real look at it and judge by the facts. But suppose they do and find its pages full of cuss-words? In the majority of cases such a display will merely make them say "I told you so," drop the book and never give it a real hearing.

You may think this a small matter. It isn't. I've been watching people's reactions to our magazine a whole lot more closely than you have and for more years than most of you. And those of you who know the magazine game will agree with me in saying that this matter is a very big one indeed.

IN OUR case it is particularly important. Our magazine was founded primarily for men above the average intelligence and culture of magazine readers in general—to meet the need of men whose regular diet is law books, medical books, serious business affairs, the more serious and heavy magazines, but who, for entertainment, for change, for rest, for something to take them out of themselves, turn to stories of action, without heavy problems, dealing with the great outdoors from which most of them are shut away. Our opportunity lay in the fact that so many of this type of story were so poorly done that men of that kind could not read them, even for change and relaxation, with real enjoyment.

Men of that type are, and have always been, the back-bone of *Adventure's* audience. Over and over again have come in letters coupling *Adventure* and the *Atlantic* as the favorite magazines. Our correspondence is full of letters from lawyers, physicians, educators, legislators, judges, scientists, ministers and priests or bearing the letter-head of business firms. We can not afford to offend these men, and the unrestrained use of printed cuss-words would, in bulk and in the long run, be offensive to them.

OUR problem is to get such men even to pick up our magazine in spite of its name, its apparently sensational character and its unglazed paper long enough to find out what really is inside of it. It's been printed for nearly twelve years now and still there comes in the stream of letters saying "never picked up your magazine till the other day and was much surprized; count me a regular reader from now on." But if, when they do pick it up, they find it full of unrestrained cuss-words—well, people don't sit down and reason out a case like that. Most of them go on first impressions, particularly when a first impression has already been formed.

Mind you, in most cases it *isn't the cuss-words themselves that offend.* It's the fact that a magazine, examined for the first time, which on the face of things uses cuss-words without restraint, discrimination or regard for those who are offended by cuss-words, seems to them, naturally enough, a magazine little likely to use restraint, discrimination or regard for people's sensibilities in other and more important matters, particularly the choice of stories.

NOW we've got to the heart of things. It isn't just a question of cuss-words *vs.* dashes, but of discrimination, restraint, care and consideration in the general editing of the magazine. The use of dashes indicates to the possible new reader the presence of these things. The unrestrained use of printed cuss-words indicates their absence and therefore the kind of magazine it isn't worth while to examine further. Justly or unjustly, it's a trade-mark, brand and advertisement of good character and good quality. Those of you who are advertising or magazine men got this point before I put it into words. It's a business asset and a big one, this use of dashes.

THE above reason is solely a business one. My third reason for dashes is an ethical one. However lightly you and I personally may regard cussing, we can not maintain that it is an admirable habit nor do most of us teach it to our children or enjoy hearing children curse. If it does not seem to us downright immoral, at least it seems loose, unrestrained and, in general, a mark of coarseness and vulgarity rather than of manliness or mere unconventionality. Also we know very certainly that to many other people it is extremely offensive. The speech of the characters in our stories must at least approximate real life. To make it so, we must choose between two methods:—either handle it with dashes and thereby manfully and frankly express our general disapproval of cussing, thus not encouraging children in its use and thus respecting the feelings of those to whom it is offensive, or else flaunt it through the magazine without restraint or consideration or anything else to suggest that it isn't a good thing for everybody to copy fully and without reservation or thought. I had to make that choice, chose the former and shall have to stick to it.

As I said in the beginning, I'm not arguing but merely stating my position. Since human ethics are involved there's endless room for argument. Maybe my position is unsound, but it's the best I've been able to dope out for myself in twelve years and I'll have to stick to it. And, after all, it's *my* responsibility.

ONE other thing occurs to me. You who object so violently to dashes and prefer the cuss-words themselves, as real honest-to-goodness cussers you sound to me like pikers and four-flushers. Can't you think of a cuss-word without have some one else say it for you first? If you're such damned good cussers and love cuss-words so much, why in hell can't you fill in the dashes without an effort and with just the cuss-word that best fits each particular case?

OF COURSE Thomson Burtis is the man to answer this comrade, but his letter makes good reading. The advertisement in question reads:

> American Aviator, experienced on front, wants a job; anything considered, war-flying preferred; would like to hear from the agents of Mustapha Kemal or Abdul el Krim. Box 1,116, Herald.

The letter follows:

New York City, N. Y.

For quite a long time I've been intending to write you but it seems like I have never really had the ambition until now. To begin with, I'll rise up to remark that I have always been an interested "listener" at the Camp-Fire, since 'way back in 1912, but have never had the nerve to get up and speak my little piece. So, just throw another log on the fire, get out your old pipe, and listen while I sing my little song:

I'VE roamed around a bit, if I do say it myself, and always with the ambition that sometime I might be able, some day, to write stories for magazines, etc. So far, I have never attempted it, although I have had a dozen or so moving picture stories produced by various companies.

In 1912 I enlisted in the 4th Field Artillery and later was in the scrap at Vera Cruz, Mexico, in 1914. Discharged in 1915 and, being as I was of French descent, and naturally "argumentative," I enlisted in the French Air Service and saw considerable action; also made a trip or two to the hospitals after being shot down by our friend "Heinie." Came back to God's Country in the early part of 1917, but was still too banged up to get in the U. S. Army when we entered the scrap, so I made life miserable for various recruiting officers until July, 1918, when I was finally accepted in the Air Service and sent to a flying-field in California as an instructor. All right, so much for that.

LAST July (1921) I began to feel restless and "argumentative" again, so I wandered over to France once more, in hopes that I could get in touch with our Spanish friends in order to offer my services as a flyer. They weren't very enthusiastic about accepting the services of Americans, and made a lot of conditions which I couldn't "see," so I didn't join. I still wanted to get in the scrap, so I hunted around Paris for Mustapha Kemal and Abdul el Krim, the "big noises" of the Moroccans, in order to see what I could do on that end. They only had a couple of dilapidated Curtiss "Jennys" and a whole flock of pilots of all nationalities, so they tried to blarney me into going into their Field Artillery branch, but, as I wanted to get back once more in the ranks of the "Ozone Hounds," that little deal fell through. So much for that. Now, here's the main reason for this letter:

LATER, I was reading the Paris Edition of the New York *Herald* and I came across a very interesting advertisement, which I am enclosing herewith. After reading it I tried to locate the C. C. Seale, formerly of the 135th Aero Squadron, with the intention of "teaming up" with him, as he and I seemed to have the same inclinations, but, I never succeeded in locating him. Perhaps he found the Moroccans' agent or agents, and had his fun. I don't know, but I sure wish him luck.

In reading the stories by Mr. Burtis, the name and personality of his character, *Tex MacDowell*, stands out pretty prominently, and, needless to say, makes a decided "hit" with yours truly. In reading the enclosed newspaper comment on the advertisement by Mr. Seale, you will have noticed that Mr. Seale comes from Texas, and, like the fictitious *Tex MacDowell*, also seems "bored with life on the ground." I've been wondering, after reading about the exploits of *Tex MacDowell*, and the advertisement by Mr. Seale, if they are not really the same person. It looks like *Tex* left the Air Service and wandered over to Europe, doesn't it? Perhaps Mr. Burtis knows Seale, and he may in truth be the original *Tex MacDowell*.—— ——.

WHILE waiting for Expedition votes to come in and for the returns to be tabulated and passed on to you, here is an offer that looks good. Of course it advertises the firm in question but what of it? I've attended a private lecture at those headquarters and it's a fine place for a meeting, particularly as it is so big that any local comrades who wished could foregather with the committee—if your vote decides on a committee. It would be a question for the committee itself to decide.

New Haven, Conn.

In the March 10th issue, I read an article about the Camp-Fire expedition. You more than likely will have an executive committee to select the place for the expedition, and I offer this suggestion: Winchester Sportsman's Headquarters, located at 469 Fifth Avenue, New York, might be an excellent place to hold your meeting.

At these Headquarters also, you can get information first-hand about every place in the world—the kind of information that your committee would more than likely want.

Also if the expedition is out of this country, our export traffic department could no doubt be of assistance to you and also at Sportsman's Headquarters, where buyers of the Winchester stores are located. These men could no doubt be of valuable assistance.

You know Winchester and what Winchester stands for. We will be very glad to aid in any way that we can. If we can be of any service, call upon us.—PETER P. CARNEY.

HERE'S another step toward locating the weapons of Daniel Boone:

Louisville, Kentucky.

Being a Kentuckian, I heartily endorse the motion made by Comrade Little in regard to locating the weapons owned by Daniel Boone.

We have here in the Museum of the Louisville Public Library a rifle and bullet-mold which he once owned. The rifle has a barrel about three feet in length, a rather short, narrow stock, and a large bore. The hammer, trigger, and trigger-guard are missing; otherwise, it is in a fair state of preservation. The museum-keeper told me there was another of his rifles at Frankfort, Kentucky.

There is also in the Museum a sash and sword which were once owned by Kit Carson.—THEO. LANCASTER.

RESULTS of our vote by readers on the stories printed in the magazine for 1921 will be printed in an early issue. In the meantime be marking down your favorites for 1922.

Don't let the stories in the later issues overshadow those earlier in the year merely because you read the former later and have them more vividly in your mind. And don't let the mere length of serial, novel or novelette outweigh the short stories.

Voting is simple and easy. On any sheet of paper write your list of ten stories (giving author's names), numbering them in order of preference. If you like, add as many as ten stories more by way of complimentary mention or second choice. Add your name and address. But don't send your vote until the end of the year.—A. S. H.

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader

In the last issue of each month are printed in full the friendly services of *Adventure* to readers: Free identification card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchange; Camp-Fire Buttons; Camp-Fire Stations, etc.

MEXICO AS A WHOLE

Trees with Roots Bigger Than Their Trunks—Ten Crops of Sugar and Twelve of Alfalfa a Year

By J. W. Whiteaker

THE American public has little conception of Mexico or its wonderful natural resources. That the country is rich in oil and minerals they seem to know in a general way. The agricultural wealth of the country and the industrial possibilities seem to have been overlooked during the past ten years ot warfare. There is no country that has a better future in agricultural possibilities, for every climate from the torrid heat of the tropics to the ice and snow of the north-temperate zone can be found in her confines. The industrial possibilities should not be overlooked either.

The cities of northern Mexico show a decided American influence. This will be of great assistance to the country in securing the much-needed financial aid for the development of resources.

History—After Columbus discovered the West Indies the neighboring coast of the mainland was visited and settled. Thus the Spanish came in possession of Mexico and some of the country north, which now belongs to the United States. Explorers found so much gold and silver that many Spaniards settled there. They opened mines, started coffee-plantations, farms and cattle-ranches. Many intermarried with the Indians, so that Mexico has a varied population. There are savage Indians, half-civilized Aztecs, Spanish-Indian half-breeds, and some pure-blooded Spaniards.

Government—Spain governed Mexico so badly that the people finally rebelled and in 1821 won their independence. They then established a republican form of government patterned after our own. There are twenty-eight States, each with a Government and capital, two Territories and a Federal District which contains their capital, City of Mexico.

For a long time Texas, New Mexico, Utah, California, Arizona, and a part of Colorado were a part of Mexico. Texas won her independence by war and joined the United States, and as a result of our war with Mexico the United States obtained all the land mentioned above in 1848.

The Constitution of the Mexican States provides for a representative form of government, the several States of the union regulating their internal affairs. The National Congress is composed of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies, the former consisting of two members for each State and the Federal District, elected directly for a term of four years. One-half of the Senate is renewed every two years.

Suffrage is possessed by all male citizens who have reached the age of 18 years if married and of 21 years if unmarried.

Congress meets on the first day of September of each year in regular session, which shall last the period necessary to deal with all matters; but it may not be extended beyond the 31st of December.

The President is chosen by direct vote for a term of four years but can not be reelected. His salary is 50,000 pesos ($25,000) a year. He is assisted by a cabinet of seven secretaries, who are appointed by him and are directly responsible to him for the proper administration of their respective departments. These departments are: Interior (Gobernacion), Foreign Relations (Relaciones Exteriores), Agriculture and Promotion (Agricultura y Fomento), Communications and Public Works (Communicaciones y Obras Publicas), Finance (Hacienda y Credito Publico), War and Marine (Guerra y Marina), Industry, Commerce and Labor (Industria, Comercia y Trabajo). This last department is divided into four sections—those of internal commerce, external commerce, insurance, and publications and statistics.

The Territories are administered by the President, while the Federal District is in the hands of three officials, likewise appointed by the President.

The States and Territories are subdivided into municipalities which elect their own administrative councils and mayors. Schools are under the control of the municipalities; higher education is under the Federal control.

Surface Features—Mexico consists of four sections at different heights above the sea-level. The lowest is a coastal plain and other low lands near the sea. The second includes the slopes that extend toward the high lands of the interior. The third is the high land itself, a broad plateau occupying a large part of the interior of the country. The fourth consists of mountain ranges and peaks, which are a continuation of the Cordillera of the U. S. Among the mountains are volcanic cones, two of them—Orizaba and Popocatepetl—being among the highest on the continent.

Rivers—The divide of this narrow part of North America extends from north to south, sending some of its streams to the west and others eastward. Thus all of the streams are short. The longest is the Rio Grande, which is the boundary between Mexico and Texas. This stream is 1,833 miles long from the Gulf of Mexico to El Paso, Texas.

Most of the rivers in the interior of the republic have a rapid fall in descending from the interior plateau and have cut deep cañons in its edges. The streams pass through such an arid country that they have little water. Rivers of this kind are not useful for navigation but are used to some extent in irrigation. This lack of large streams has greatly interfered with the development of Mexico.

The mountainous nature of the country greatly increases the supply of water available. It can safely be stated that in every place in the country water-power can be found at a reasonable distance to be used and turned into electrical power.

Coast-Line and Harbors—As in our Southern States, the land has been rising instead of sinking. The coast is regular and there are not many good harbors. There are two large peninsulas projecting from the mainland, Yucatan and Lower California.

Mexico is the fourth largest independent country of the new continent and the second largest in North America. It is as large as the States of Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada combined, and about as sparsely populated as they are. Mexico has a coast of some 4, 574 miles on the Pacific and 1,727 miles on the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. There are 24 ports on the Gulf coast, the best being Vera Cruz and Tampico; there are 31 ports on the Pacific, the best being Acapulco, San Blas, Mazatlan, Guaymas and Agiabampo.

Climate—Mexico has four different kinds of climate, to correspond closely with the four areas of different altitudes. The low coastal plain near Vera Cruz and in Yucatan has the hot climate of the tropical zone with an abundance of rain, brought on by the damp winds that blow across the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. On the slopes west of these plains the temperature is not so hot, but there is much rain. This belt is sub-tropical.

The interior plateau is so high that the climate is temperate even in the part that lies south of the Tropic of Cancer, but there is so little rain that the country is arid. The climate becomes steadily cooler the higher one goes. Even within the tropical zone, there are places among the mountains where the snow never melts and where there are true glaciers. On these high mountain slopes the rainfall is quite heavy. Although most of Mexico is within the tropical zone, as a general rule all sections of the country under 3,000 feet above sea-level are considered hot and are called the hot lands. From 3,000 to 4,500 feet the climate is temperate, and above 4,500 feet the climate is generally cold. Local conditions, however, such as the direction of the valleys and mountains, the winds, the proximity of the rivers, lakes and underground streams, the forests, as well as the rainfall modify the climate to a certain extent.

There are two kinds of rain—the temporary and the tropical. The temporary rains are caused by the sudden fall in the barometric pressure, originated in the Gulf of Mexico, and cover a large area lasting from 3 to 6 days. They increase in the afternoon and evening and are followed by clear weather.

The tropical rains originate from the atmospheric troubles in the tropical zone and cover nearly the whole country. They come in two periods. The first appear in April and May and are accompanied by electrical storms and preceeded by intense heat. They last from 15 to 20 days with frequent intermissions. The second period commences at the end of June and lasts until about the second week in October with few intermissions. The rain is intense especially in the afternoons and evenings, but seldom with electrical storms.

About fifteen per cent. of the total area of Mexico receives on an average about 10 inches of rain per year, which makes farming impossible. Dry-land farming can be conducted in sections where the rainfall is between 10 and 20 inches per year; and in sections where the rainfall is as much as 30 inches per year farming can be carried on with profit.

Products from Trees and Native Plants—In the greater part of Mexico, large tree forests are rare except upon the higher mountains. In fact there is so little timber on the arid plateau that the inhabitants find difficulty in obtaining wood for fuel. Much of this is obtained from the ground; for some of the arid-land bushes, such as the mesquite, have long thick roots which make excellent firewood.

The other plants found in the arid lands resemble those of our Western States, such as the bunch grass, so-called because it grows in little tufts or bunches having a dozen or more blades. The sagebush, a plant with a pale-green leaf named because of its sagelike odor, is found throughout most of this region.

Other common plants are the century plant with its sharp-pointed leaves, the cactus with its numerous spines, the yucca with thorny branches, the guayule and other rubber-producing plants.

Even before the conquest of Mexico northern Mexico was a rubber-producing country, the source being a shrub or dwarf tree known as guayule. The natives obtained the gum by checking the bark and made balls of it.

Guayule at its best is found growing on the central Mexican plateau in great quantities. The district is nearly rainless and is very thinly populated. The land is practically grassless and contains no large trees, being a typical desert country.

The total area of guayule lands is about 130,000 square miles, a large part of which is in the Chihuahuan Desert. Guayule is different from most other rubber-producing plants in that its bark contains no latex, the rubber being in the tissue of the epidermis and in the branches and leaves. The blossoms are without traces of rubber. The amount of rubber decreases toward the roots. The bark contains resins and essential oils, which decrease the value of the rubber.

On account of the dry climate some of the plants have a severe struggle to live, and they protect themselves in peculiar ways. For example, the cactus, unlike most plants, has no true leaves. Thus it exposes little surface to the air for evaporation. In its great, fleshy stem it stores water for use through the long dry seasons, while its long needle-like spines protect it from animals in search of food.

One kind of cactus, the prickly pear, grows to enormous heights, often higher than houses. Blooms form on it and when these blossoms fall off an apple appears. When this becomes ripe it has a reddish purple color. These apples are covered with bunches of short spines about an eighth of an inch long and the size of a very fine hair. The Mexicans are very fond of these apples after peeling off the outer skin as the meat has an acid taste of fine flavor.

The mesquite protects itself also by thorns. The roots of this tree are often larger than the tree body. The roots furnish much of the fuel used in this region. The mesquite has long beans, not unlike our pole-beans, that grow in bunches. There is a sweetish taste to the beans which horses, cattle, goats, deer, and other animals are fond of. The leaves are also eaten by them, but it is dangerous for them to do so, on account of long keen thorns hidden under the fine leaves, which may become lodged in their throats.

Some of these plants of the arid section, like the sagebush, have such a disagreeable smell and taste that animals will not eat them. The rubber-tree is cultivated in many sections as rubber production is one of the leading industries. A most valuable native plant is henequen, a cactus-like sister to the century plant, a variety of hemp, which thrives in many parts and is used today in making cordage, coarse cloths, saddle-bags, twine, hammocks and other articles having fibers as a basis.

Another important plant is the vanilla bean, which grows upon a climbing vine. In the seed pod are nestled the fragrant beans which are used for making flavoring-extracts, for perfumeries and for medicine. Pepper made from the dried berry of a tropical plant is also obtained here.

Another plant product is chicle, which forms the basis of our popular chewing-gum. The Aztecs were the first chewers of gum on the continent, obtaining their supply from the Achras sapote tree by tapping, much the same way as maple-trees are tapped in New England. The wood of the tree takes on a fine polish and is very durable. The grown trees average between 40 and 50 feet in height. Indigo, useful as a dye, is obtained from a berry; and likewise sarsaparilla is extracted from the roots of a tropical plant of this region.

On the damp lowlands, on the other hand, there are dense tropical forests. In these are found the many valuable woods, such as mahogany, rosewood, ebony, logwood, fustic and other cabinet and dye-woods. Nut trees abound, and there is an annual production of nearly half a million dollars' worth of nuts.

Agriculture on the Arid Plains—Irrigation—Although the climate of a large part of Mexico is arid, agriculture is the principal industry of the people. This is partly due to the snows and rains among the mountains, which supply water for irrigation. On the irrigated farms the products of the temperate zone are raised such as wheat, corn, fruits—apples, pears, plums, grapes, peaches, apricots, figs—and beans, the principal food of the Mexicans. Indian corn should have been mentioned first as its original home is Mexico, and from there it has spread.

A species of native arid-land plant called agave is of great value. The stout, sharp-pointed leaves of the agave rise in a tuft from near the ground. In the center stands the flower-stalk, which sometimes reaches a height of 40 feet, and which bears a cluster of white flowers on top. The natives use the flowers in making soup or some other dish to eat with chile con carne or hot tamales. The taste is very pleasing. It requires from 7 to 50 years for the plant to bloom so it is often called the century plant.

From the juice of the plant the Mexicans obtain an alcoholic drink known as *pulque*, which is a high-class beverage, used principally by the upper class of Mexicans. Another drink is also obtained called *mescal*, which is of a poorer grade and much cheaper in price. This is used by the poorer class of people or the peons.

There are several varieties of agave, from one of which is obtained a fiber which is made into paper and strong thread. The peons with some of this thread and a mesquite thorn do most of their sewing. From the juice of one kind of agave, called maguey, soap is made. The maguey is so valuable that on nearly all the plantations a large patch is cultivated.

Farming Methods and Home Life—The Mexican farming methods, which are very crude, are a mixture of ancient Aztec customs and those introduced from Spain several centuries ago. Wooden plows, which barely scrape the ground, pulled by an ox or a burro, and carts with wooden wheels from 5 to 7 feet high drawn by oxen or burros, are often seen in all parts of the country. After the seed has been placed in the ground, the farmer often goes hunting or rests in the shade of his house until the crop is ready to gather. There are, however, many farmers who are becoming up to date by using American implements and following their American neighbors' methods.

The home life of the people is very interesting. The majority of the houses are one story and built of sun-dried bricks of adobe. There is usually one room, the roof of which is covered with brush or thatched with de soto grass. The floor is often of well-packed earth or of flat, smooth rocks placed close together. In this room the whole family, of an average of six, do their cooking, eating and sleeping and have most of their dogs, pet goats, pigs, and chickens for company.

Mexicans are a happy, care-free people. Their food is very simple—corn-bread cooked on a hot flat rock, beans, pepper, goat, deer, wild boar, and sometimes beef. They have goat-milk, water, coffee, beer or *mescal* for drink.

There are many varieties of vegetables found in the forests in a wild state that they gather, and also many wild fruits and nuts. The whole family from the babies to the gray-headed grandparents use tobacco.

This is the home life of the average family in the rural districts. In the cities the wealthy and the educated have home environment somewhat similar to the home life in cities of our country. All of the large cities in Mexico have an American quarter in which most of the Americans live. The American population is large in some of these cities.

Ranching—So much of Mexico is arid that large sections are suited only for grazing purposes. The ranches of cattle, goats, and horses are found in nearly all sections so that hides, wool, and meat are important exports. The sections most fit for cattle-raising are the Gulf coastal plains, where the transportation facilities are better.

Cattle-raising is done in the most primitive way. It is only in the central part of Mexico, near the cities, where special breeds have been imported, that scientifically conducted stock farms are seen. This kind of ranching is very profitable.

Many horses and mules are raised; but the little Mexican jackass, or burro, is one of the most common draft animals. He is steady, strong, tough, stubborn and sure-footed, the last characteristic making him very useful on the mountain trails. He is used to carry ore from the mines over narrow mountain paths, and can carry as much as a quarter of a cord of mesquite roots on his back.

Hogs are raised in large numbers, as also are goats. The goats are prized not only for their hides and meat but also for their milk, which is used for the same purposes that we use cow-milk.

Farming on the Lower Humid Land—On the damp lowlands the farm products are quite different from those on the arid plateau. There rice, sugar-cane and cotton are produced. Sugar and cocoa have been cultivated for ages. Although cotton is a comparatively new crop in Mexico's present economy it was known to the Aztecs. The area upon which sugar-cane is grown in Mexico is located in 18 of the 28 States.

The lowlands along the coasts are well adapted to its growth and as many as ten crops may be harvested from one planting. In the coast regions very little cultivation is needed and the yield has been as high as 35 tons per acre. The sugar industry is in a backward state and very little modern machinery is in use.

Tropical fruits, such as oranges, bananas, coconuts and pineapples are grown. The coconut industry is almost wholly undeveloped in Mexico, but there are large tracts of land suitable for coconut products.

Upon the slopes between the tropical lowlands and the temperate plateau much tobacco, cotton, and coffee are raised. Coffee is one of the most valuable products of Mexico; it requires a rich soil, abundant moisture, a warm climate, and plenty of shade. A white blossom appears as early as March and after the flower falls off the coffee berry begins to grow. It resembles a dark-red cranberry.

The productivity of the soil of Mexico is very uneven. In certain sections near the coast, three crops of corn can be obtained in the year. Alfalfa grows very fast, being cut every month, and this Mexican alfalfa has no equal in the world as a stock hay. But in the high lands of the central plateau the soil has been practically exhausted by continuous cultivation for centuries without the aid of fertilizers.

Mining—One of the principal objects of the Spaniards in exploring the New World was to obtain gold and silver; and they were rewarded in their search by the discovery of rich mines in Mexico and in South America. Some of the mines were being worked by Indians; others they found themselves. Mexico is still a great mining country, rivaling the United States in the production of silver. Gold, silver, copper, zinc, lead, iron, coal and other minerals are found in large quantities.

In the past few years great quantities of petroleum have been found on the coastal plain near Tampico. Mexico is now third among the petroleum-producing countries, being surpassed only by the United States and by Russia.

The great bulk of Mexican production comes from the fields of the Tampico-Tuxpam region. These fields are generally grouped in two zones—the Tampico or Panuco River valley zone and the Tuxpam or Southern fields zone.

The important production of petroleum in Mexico began in 1910, although petroleum had been known in Mexico long before that date. The Spaniards found an asphalt or petroleum residuum for sale in the markets at the time of the conquest.

It is estimated that several hundred thousand square miles of Mexican territory are underlaid with mineral oils, of which about 10,000 square miles have been explored and 6,000 square miles are being prospected. Remarkably few wells have been drilled in Mexico when one considers the amount of petroleum produced.

Mexico consumes about 5,000,000 tons of coal and about 2,500,000 tons of coke annually. As the total output of the country is less than 2,000,000 tons each year, consumers are dependent on the United States and Europe for the remainder of their coal supply. It is claimed, however, that at the present rate of development it will be only a few years until it will be unnecessary to import coal.

Mining is the most highly developed and best organized of Mexico's industries; its importance is shown by the fact that a recent estimate gives the amount of capital engaged as $650,000,000. Of this amount about $500,000,000 is American, about $88,000,000 English, $10,000,000 French and the balance Mexican.

Difficulties in Mining—One great difficulty in mining in Mexico is the lack of good coal. Another is the lack of transportation. A third is the fact that much of the region can not be explored for ore, as some parts of the country are still occupied by tribes of savage Indians who not only prevent prospectors from coming in, but even defy the Government. Another difficulty is the old-fashioned methods of mining employed by many of the Mexicans. Some of these methods are the same as those used by the Indians centuries ago. But as many mines are owned by Americans, Europeans, or educated Mexicans, methods are being improved.

Manufacturing—Because of the ignorance of the working people and the scarcity of coal there is not a great deal of manufacturing in the country and that done is mostly by hand. Some of this hand-work is very beautiful, for even the uneducated Mexicans are quite artistic. Mexican drawn work has always been bought by tourists in that country.

The manufacture of cotton goods is now gaining in importance. There is a great deal of money tied up in cotton mills, but it will not be very long before they will have to close down unless steps are taken soon to stamp out the pink boll worm, which is spreading rapidly. This worm is worse than even the Mexican boll weevil which came to the United States in the early 90's, and is harder to destroy as it lives in the lint of the compressed bale. There are no large manufacturing towns in Mexico as there are in the United States.

A Few Cities of Mexico—There are a few large cities, the greatest being the capital, City of Mexico, built on the site of an ancient Aztec Indian city. It is situated on a high plateau and therefore, although far south, has a cool climate. In this city, as elsewhere in Mexico, there are many fine churches and other notable buildings.

Another city is Puebla, founded in 1531. It is also situated near one of the ancient cities of the Aztecs. Guadalajara is a third important city. On the eastern coast are Tampico and Vera Cruz.

There are several good harbors on the western coast. One of these is Acapulco; but since it is backed by high mountains and a thinly settled country that port has never reached the importance that it would have under different surroundings.

Exports and Imports—The principal exports: Petroleum, silver, gold, copper, lead, zinc, henequen, cotton, coffee, rubber, hides, skins, guayule, cattle, chicle, sugar, fruits, chick-peas, and cabinet and dye woods. Principal imports: Machinery, iron and steel, textiles and manufactures, lumber, coal, corn, vegetable oils, coke, grain and drugs.

Capital Invested—Foreigners in Mexico—The Department of Commerce and Labor of the United States estimates the amount of capital invested in Mexico by Americans to be about $750,000,000, one-third of this amount being in railroads. Nearly all of the important lines are owned largely by Americans. The Mexican Government in recent years bought the controlling interest in several of these roads and united them under the name of the National Railways of Mexico.

There are over 19,000 miles of railroads in the Republic. The telegraph system owned by the Government has a combined length of 52,000 miles, with 520 telegraph offices, 15 telephone stations, and 20 wireless stations. Postal routes have a length of 26,500 miles with about 2,700 post-offices.

Foreigners according to law are allowed to enjoy all of the guarantees and rights accorded to Mexicans and on the other hand they are exempt from the duties and obligations inherent to citizenship.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses for full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1, 2. The Sea. In Two Parts
3. Islands and Coasts
4, 5. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
6. Australia and Tasmania
7. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
8. New Guinea
9. Philippine Islands
10. Hawaiian Islands and China
11. Japan
12. Asia, Southern
13—19. Africa. In Seven Parts
20. Turkey and Asia Minor
21, 22. Balkans. In Two Parts
23. Scandinavia
24, 25. South America. In Two Parts
26. Central America
27, 28. Mexico. In Two Parts
29—35. Canada. In Seven Parts
36. Alaska
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38—43. Western U. S. In Six Parts
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Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
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Fishing in North America
Mountains and Mountaineering
Standing Information

Source of the Ganges

POSSIBLY Mr. Gange's question was prompted by genealogical interest. Can any one supplement the answer given by Capt. Giddings?

Question:—"I am seeking information in regard to the Ganges River in India, as to the discoverer and how it was so named. I will appreciate any information in detail, that you can give."—G. H. GANGE, Los Angeles, Calif.

Answer, by Capt. Giddings:—I can give you no information as to who discovered the Ganges River, nor as to the why and wherefore of its name.

Its source is an ice cave at the foot of an Himalayan snow-bed, some ten thousand five hundred feet above the level of the sea.

Californians

YOU get what you look for, in the Golden State, same as anywhere else:

Question:—"I want to move to California and go to farming in a small way. My capital consists of $1,500 and the will to work. I have any amount of real-estate literature from different parts of the State and, like all of its kind, it's highly promising of good returns from the farms.

Knowing that any information coming from you is disinterested, I would like to have your opinion on this matter.

Having seen a number of questions answered by you in "Ask Adventure," I realize that my request is not exactly in your line; and if you are not in position to answer, that will be all right.

I also heard that the people of California are a rather stiff-necked sort and not very sociable and that they consider a poor man not worth noticing. Personally I do not believe this, but mention it so you can put me straight about it.

Would southern California be preferred to northern California, say either Riverside County or Sacramento County?

Enclosed find stamped and addressed envelop."
—J. K. MILLER, Liberty, Tex.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Right at the start let me thank you for crediting me with giving disinterested advice. Some men have criticized me severely for telling facts regarding farming, seeming to think that I purposely concealed the cases of failure. Many fail here, it is true, but these men are the kind that will not wait to post themselves, but grab blindly. Often they are men who are wholly ignorant of farming, but think "any fool can farm."

It is a fact that men who are good farmers in the East and who spend some months studying soils, irrigation, California methods and markets, do not fail one time in a thousand. They select their land with judgment and care. They cultivate and plant understandingly. They win, and win big.

Also let me take up the subject of Californians now.

Do not forget that a vast majority of present-day Californians came from States east of the Rockies. It is these people who furnish the stiff manners and uncordial ways. I have lived here since February, 1886, and I have found the real Californian hospitable, generous, kind, neighborly.

To illustrate the manner in which some folks tack charges on the men of California, study this. Across the street from me lives a young couple. They have a newly built home. The husband made a bargain to sell it. He asked his wife to sign the deed. She refused, as she loved her home. He went to the purchaser and handed back the earnest money, telling him why the sale was blocked and how. The purchaser flew in a rage.

"I'm —— if I'll stay in a State where the people act that way. It is exactly what I was told in the East. Californians don't care a —— about a bargain. They are all liars and crooks. I am going back East."

He went; and the funny part is, the folks who roused his wrath came here from Wisconsin only nine months previously. But California got the blame.

The crooked men of the East have flocked here because the picking is fine among the tourists. The crookedest real-estate man this town ever held came from the East coast, tidewater country.

This city was held up as a horrible example in the Fall of 1920, because we had so many in our jail. We must be terrible. Seventy-eight of those men in our jail were wanted in the East, and our police arrested them on Eastern warrants. We were blamed because we did what Eastern officers failed to do—jugged their criminals. Oh, we get it handed to us hot.

Don't you believe the tales about Californian coldness and selfishness. In one copy of the *Times* last year I read two letters. One was from an old hen of a woman who scored this city for coldness and lack of hospitality. The other was from a second woman who wished to thanks us, on the eve of her departure for home, for having shown her so much kindness.

If a man comes here expecting to meet kindly people, he finds them. If he comes here expecting to find cold, calculating meanness, he finds it.

People in California are just as they were in the East; same natures. Crossing the country does not change them much, only at times they cut loose because they have left the folks who knew them.

Men are making money fast in Imperial Valley. Lots of them have gone there with practically nothing that now are independent. I know of cases there where a man has come within fifteen per cent. of paying for his plot of land with his first crop. I know of men there who have cleaned up in eight years more than twenty thousand dollars above a living, starting broke and working as hired men for the first year, then renting.

It gets hot in Summer, mighty hot; but it's dry heat.

My advice to every man who wishes to start farming in this State is, work for others for a year and study ways, soil, methods of marketing. No man should assume that he can make a sucess of farming here without a close study of conditions and methods.

We do our farming so vastly differently here. We have to. Soil, water, temperature, winds, frosts, seasons, all must be studied.

Sacramento Valley is rich and its farmers make money, but a farmer is foolish if he buys there without ascertaining exactly what the soil has averaged in the past. Don't buy a foot of ground until you have made sure regarding every contingency. That is why I advise working for others for a time. See the place for a full year first. Then no sharper can put one over on you.

I note what you say you have been told about Californians thinking a poor man not worth noticing. I landed here with a dollar eighty cents in cash and a debt of seventy-five dollars on my shoulders. Nobody asked me what I had or seemed to care a whoop. Within a month I had friends in town who are my friends still, after thirty-five years.

Riverside County is about all given over to citrus-fruit raising, in the parts that are cultivated at all. Some farms, but the bulk of the land is raising fruit. A large part of Riverside County is still desert, where irrigation water has not reached it. I advise you to take a look at the Imperial country and learn all you can about it first.

Then go up to Sacramento Valley and look that over. It will pay you.

At least take your time about investing your money and make sure you are getting the right kind of soil, near a market.

Lots of men have started in Imperial with less than you have on hand and have made good splendidly. I know of two who each bought forty acres on time, paying five hundred down. Two crops paid out on the land, besides the cost of leveling, cultivating, etc., and left them enough for putting in a third crop. Today one values his holdings, after ten years, at forty-two thousand dollars. The other holds his at thirty-eight thousand.

They bought other lands as fast as they could, of course.

To my notion Imperial and Sacramento represent the best in the south and the central portions of the State.

Here is wishing you good luck, wherever you land.

Names and addresses of "A. A." department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in alternate issues of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Rifles for African Big Game

ALSO a short comparison of various standard firearms, and a few words on the right kinds of gun oil:

Question:—"1. How do Savage arms compare to Winchester and Remington rifles?

2. An opinion of Savage rifles generally.

3. Is it possible to change the action of a rifle? For instance: I am right-handed, but shoot left-handed, and can not use bolt-action rifles without taking the gun down from my shoulder.

4. What Savage gun would you recommend for African big-game hunting?

5. What gun (any make) would you recommend for the same purpose?

6. How does the Savage automatic pistol compare to others?

7. What gun oil is the best?"—EUGENE R LOPEZ, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—*First:* The rifles made by the Savage and Remington and Winchester companies are as good as can be made, is my experience; and I own and use all three. I have been well satisfied with all the arms made by all three companies, and think you will make no mistake in selecting any arm made by them.

Second: I have found Savage rifles reliable, accurate arms in every case.

Third: The bolt of a bolt-action rifle could be changed, but the expense would be very heavy, as complete new forgings would have to be made for the bolt, and perhaps the receiver also.

Fourth: I would recommend the new .300 Savage for the larger African game.

Fifth: For the heavier African game, from all the rifles available I would select one of the heavy, double-barreled English rifles, say a .400 or .450 caliber.

Sixth: The Savage automatic pistol is very accurate and reliable.

Seventh: I have found the three following oils all very fine: Remoil, Marbles Nitro-Solvent oil, and Hoppes.

Hiking through New England's Mountains

GET acquainted with the Long Trail to Smugglers' Notch:

Question:—"Having seen in *Adventure* that you cover the mountains of New England, I would like to ask you a few questions in regard to them, as a friend and I expect to hike through the Green and White Mountains this Summer and we only want to follow trails. We intend to spend two months doing it. So here go the questions.

1. What is the Long Trail of the Green Mountain Club? Where does it start and finish?

2. Are there many towns along the route? If so, about how far apart, as we wish to know in regard to food-carrying?

3. What are some of the interesting points along the trail?

4. Is it mostly private of State-owned land? Will they allow you to camp on the private property?"—HERMAN MOENNICH, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Bent:—I am glad to hear that you are planning a trip through the Green and White Mountains. You will probably find it best to go through the Green Mountains first, beginning at the south, and then cross over to the White Mountains. In regard to your questions:

1. The Long Trail of the Green Mountain Club extends from the Massachusetts State Line northward to Smugglers' Notch not far from the Canadian line. If you plan to use this trail you should send fifty cents to the Appalachian Mountain Club, 1050 Tremont Building, Boston, and ask for a copy of the "Guide-Book to the Long Trail of the Green Mountains." This will give you complete information regarding the trail and will prove a good thing to have in your pocket.

2. There are towns at frequent intervals along the trail, so that it will not be necessary for you to carry food for long periods of time. It will probably be convenient for you to have three or four days' food in your packs. The exact place to stop is best planned after reading the guide-book.

3. The points of greatest interest are located along the northern part of the trail where the mountains are higher and the scenery wilder. Smugglers' Notch dates back in local history to the days of the War of 1812, when smuggled goods were hurried through and hidden in Smugglers' Cave. Mount Mansfield has on its bare summit the largest area above tree-line in the State. Together with the Camel's Hump section just to the south this is the best part of the Green Mountain Range.

4. A tent is not necessary on most of the trail as there are shelters which can be used at night. But in the southern section a tent must be used at places. I believe that camping is allowed at any point along the Long Trail.

I should prefer to spend most of my time in the White Mountains and merely make a quick trip through the Green Mountains but that is something for every one to decide for himself. If I can help you in planning your trip in the White Mountains

I am entirely at your service. At any rate I should be pleased to hear how your trip turns out.

Climate of Northern Saskatchewan

HERE'S a letter we received taking exception to a Q and A that appeared in this department a while back. Note that the writer calls it an exaggeration to assert that the climate is "extremely" cold in this country, where he has known Winters "when the mercury did not reach fifty below"!

As a reader of your magazine and a native of northern Saskatchewan I wish to take exception to the wording of a reply by Mr. Hague to a query about western Canada, appearing in your Jan. 30th number.

First as to climate. It is healthy and on occasion cold, but in describing the average temperature for the Winter, to say that it is "extremely" cold is rather an exaggeration. For example, yesterday* it was above freezing point. True, it is a matter of official record that fifty below, and even a lower temperature, has been reached many times, but on the other hand I have know Winters in this country when the mercury did not reach fifty below once during the season.

Secondly he states that the men in the lumber camps are a "pretty tough bunch." That is a statement absolutely at variance with facts. The old type of lumberjack is disappearing, and even the old-time lumberjack in this country hardly deserved the description of "tough." He would come in the same class in which American fiction usually places the American cowboy—an overgrown boy, or a man who is still a boy at heart.

The majority of the men working in the camps at the present time are men who are on farms—in many cases their own—in the Summer and go to the bush in the Winter. Many of these are married, and practically all of them are as decent and clean-living men as any, anywhere.

I have know lumberjacks ever since I was a kiddie, and I do not hesitate to say that Mr. Hague's description of "tough" is uncalled for. Possibly he is unable to distinguish between a "red-blooded he-man" and a tough.

In the Army I found men from other vocations who lacked the common decency, honesty and generosity which are to be found in ninety-nine per cent. of the men at present employed in the woods in Western Canada.

While this is longer than I intended it to be, I would ask that in fairness to all concerned, you publish this letter in one of your issues in the near future.—J. R. RAMSAY, Bannock, Sask., Canada.

Well, we sent this letter on to Mr. Hague, who replied direct to Mr. Ramsay as follows:

Your letter of Jan. 11 addressed to Editor "A. A." Section, *Adventure*, has been forwarded on to me for reply.

With regard to your reference to northern Saskatchewan; I have always, in writing of northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, referred to that area of the two provinces lying north of the 53rd parallel of latitude, which would not include the town from which you write.

On Friday, Jan. 20, I was traveling by dog-team on a lake about one hundred miles from The Pas, and the thermometer that day registered 52 degrees below zero. The following day, when I was also traveling, it was 55 below. Admittedly these were the two coldest days so far experienced this season; but the Winter is by no means over.

At a mining camp, which I reached on Jan. 22, I found that a big percentage of the men employed had some part of their anatomy frozen. I found difficulty in getting back to The Pas on account of a frozen leg, and have been confined to bed with same since my return. I also had my face and one hand touched with frost.

You might think these personal references irrelevant, but I cite them merely to show that the climate is cold north o' 53. I have been long enough in the country to take due precautions in the matter of dress, etc., but many young men arriving in the north from warmer parts lacking experience suffer terribly from the cold.

Every Winter sees a number of men lose limbs or even lives from frostbite in northern Canada; and in a great many cases these tragedies are due to ignorance, inexperience or carelessness.

In the course of the letter to which you took exception I wrote, "There is usually plenty of work in the lumber camps in the Winter; but the men are a pretty tough bunch, and the work is very hard for an inexperienced man."

If the average lumberjack is not tough, or "hardy" if you prefer the word, I don't know what the —— he is, and the average inexperienced man would certainly not find it an easy matter to keep pace with him. I have never made any disparaging remarks regarding lumbermen and would be the last one to do so as I quite agree with you that they are a fine type of men.

During the course of a year I receive a considerable number of "A. A." queries and always endeavor to draw a mental picture of the man writing me for information. It is not as a rule difficult to judge the type of man with whom one is corresponding, and I always make an effort to give the information which I consider will be most valuable.

I am no believer in painting rosy pictures for a man who I can see is already over-imbued with a romantic sense of the "Great North" and is entirely oblivious to its drawbacks. Rather do I prefer in a case like this to overestimate the difficulties confronting him in order that he may not be disappointed when he comes to know the reality. You might question the wisdom of this course, but I am convinced in my own mind that it is the only fair thing to do.

I have seen so many boys from cities leave The Pas for the mining or lumbering camps and on trapping expeditions and returning sadder and wiser, and sometimes hopelessly maimed, that I hate to encourage a young man to hit north unless I am sure he is fit for the life and can deliver the goods.

The Pas Lumber Company is by far the largest lumbering concern operating in northern Manitoba or Saskatchewan. Their camps extend for a distance of more than one hundred miles from The Pas and new employees walk to the camp to which they are allotted.

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*January 10, 1922.

About a week ago two city boys, whose fare had been paid to The Pas by the lumber company, started out for the camps. They did not get very far, and managed to get back to town. One of them is now in hospital minus half a foot and pitiably frozen in other parts. The other came off more luckily, but by no means unscathed.

Do not think, Mr. Ramsay, that I am trying to knock the north, as I have a sincere affection for it; and it is a wonderful place for a man who can stand hardships, but it certainly no place for a weakling.

The young man, my reply to whose letter has resulted in this voluminous correspondence, was a boy seventeen years of age residing in Florida, broken down in health and with no experience in woodcraft and no trade and a desire to work in a northern lumber camp.

Would you, Mr. Ramsay, have advised him to expend a large sum of money in railway fares and clothing to come to northern Canada with the doubtful chance of securing work in a lumber camp at a wage of about $20 a month and a big chance of not being able to land a job at all?

To my way of thinking, Mr. Hague takes all the tricks.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever, but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Facts on Spanish America

AVERAGE population of a republic run by our Andalusian brethren is just this side of 10,000,000:

Question:—"Would like to know a few things about Central America.

I would like to know what the value of United States money is in Central America.

How is the best way to get there?

Can one go by auto all the way, or would it be better to go by boat?

What are the largest cities, and where located?

Any railroads?

Are the natives agreeable and easy to get along with?

How is trading, and can one sell American or U. S. goods to good advantage?

Is the country easy to get about in? I mean the inhabited parts.

How can a person make a living?"—SIDNEY F. MOTT, Winesap, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Emerson:—The total population of the twenty-one American republics maintaining the Pan-American Union approximates 200,000,000. The total area in square miles is 12,000,000. The total foreign commerce, exports and imports, $13,200,000,000, according to latest article in *Dearborn Independent* of Dec. 3d, '21, so you see there are some people and acreage out of which for you to choose as to which particular district you wish to operate in.

You can get there from New York, New Orleans or San Francisco by steamer or by railroad.

Rand-McNally's Pocket Map of Central America, 35c, will help you to see how the land lies. All railways are narrow gage except the Panama railroad which is four inches broader than "standard" (4 feet 8½ inches).

In Honduras a silver peso of 100 centavos is worth 40c gold in U. S. A. money. The metric system of weights and measures is used. The real is worth 12½c.

The natives in most parts are indolently agreeable, and many of them had rather do tomorrow what could be done today. Spanish is the language, and a trader must know what he is talking about in that language so as not to make unintended mistakes, thus giving offense where none was intended.

As to selling goods; the native is willing to buy if goods are properly presented for trading.

Not knowing your qualifications, as to whether you are a professional man, a salesman or mechanic, I can not say "how *you* can make a living," but the fact is that there are always opportunities for the right man if he can do the work and can speak Spanish so well that he can get the confidence of the people that have work to be done. A trip by auto would not be an unqualified success at any time, and most of the year would be quite impossible.

The country, taken as a whole, is not easy to get about in, as it has in many sections to be done on the back of a mule over trails.

For a real adventure you should fit out and explore (or somebody will) the many unexplored miles of the Olancho district in the Unknown Mountains, of which the Indians have a superstitious dread and will not go in there, although it is known that it contains some very rich lands, minerals and valuable woods only waiting for the man with the right "push" to go in and locate on it.

Tell me more definitely what you wish to do and then I can answer you more definitely.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

An Ohio-Mississippi River Trip

ALSO another recipe for mosquito dope:

Question:—"We are planning a trip, starting at Cincinnati, down the Mississippi to New Orleans. We intend to take our time, pulling three or four months on the trip, to start about July 15th.

We have a sixteen-foot canoe, and we think this is big enough for this trip. We would expect to sleep out quite a bit, but not always. Please write, and tell me what you think of this trip and what we need. We are not "greenhorns" by any means. I am a sailor, *not* fresh-water or navy, and have been around a bit."—HARRY M. TAYLOR, Buffalo, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—You'll find the trip down the Ohio and Mississippi a fine one to make, though the Summer season will be rather hot. You'll want to look out for mosquitoes, too, and better take some mosquito dope with you, of which perhaps mutton or beef tallow, four ounces mixed with one ounce of pennyroyal, would be as good as any. Rub it on the face and hands. Oil of citronella is also said to be a good dope if you don't like pennyroyal—use citronella in tallow or sweet oil, etc. Perhaps straight.

I don't think the canoe will serve as well as a small shanty-boat, especially as you're taking a three months' trip. Build shanty-boat eighteen to twenty-two feet long, take canoe for running around in. Current will carry the boat clear to New Orleans, and you'll have a camp to sleep in all the way. Have oars on the shanty-boat, at the bow, on 5-inch oak posts, and ¾-inch iron pin. Just build a scow about 7½ feet wide and 30-inch sides, deck bow and stern, and cabin about 14 to 16 ft. long. Lay cabin floor on bottom stringers, and have bunks, or iron bedsteads, folding cots, etc.

Current carries you seven to three miles an hour. And your genuine Home-Comfort will tickle your memory as long as you live. Come again, if I can help.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose* full *return postage to pay for it, you don't want it.

Quaint Japan

ANOTHER blanket question that pays no attention to Rule 4 on page 183, but draws a full answer just the same. Maybe Mrs. Knudson made an exception for the sake of the cause in the name of which the question was asked:

Question:—"We are making up a scrap-book on Japan to be used in the work of our Woman's Auxiliary of First Presbyterian Church, and I would much appreciate you giving me some facts concerning the people, customs, history and curios of Japan."—MRS. W. H. BROWN, Portsmouth, Va.

Answer, by Mrs. Knudson:—It is always difficult to answer a letter as general in its questioning as is yours. Because an adequate reply would be a "small volume" and the short letter I must necessarily send may be utterly inadequate from both your view-point and my own. However, perhaps I can tell you something.

The average stature of Japanese men is about the same as the average of American women—a little under, if anything. The women of Japan are proportionately smaller. This physical smallness naturally leads to living on a smaller scale than we do. This fact has impressed upon us, and upon Europeans in general, a consideration of Japan as a country in miniature. It lies in a belt favorable to growth of vegetation, and its natural island scenery combines with the former fact to stamp it upon one's memory as a sort of "picture-book" country.

We have known the people of this miniature, picture-book, island empire, by past reputation as industrious, painstaking, imitative, artistic, though we confess we do not understand them; we are learning them now to be, under the leadership of clever and able officials, a force to be reckoned with in the development of world affairs—especially in commerce.

Certain of their customs have seemed to us quaint or ludicrous, as we have either seen them or they have been reported to us by travelers. Their view-point gives them the same estimate of our customs. So that which is quaint or ludicrous is so only by comparion with familiar standards.

One of the most familiar "topsyturvydoms" of Japan is in connection with books. They begin at what we call the back—the reader turns the pages from *left* to *right*, and the end is where we have the title-page. The "foot-notes" are put at the top of the page, while the reader puts his book-mark in at the bottom, and the leaves are always double.

They preserve their potatoes in sugar, pickle their plums, and salt cherry-blossoms to infuse as tea. They dust before they sweep. They build the roof of the house first, and build the rooms to fit the size of their mats.

In running a seam the cloth is put upon the needle, instead of the needle through the cloth, and the thread is never broken from the spool until the end of the seam is reached, no matter how long it may be. They picnic by moonlight to enjoy the beauty of the night.

Authentic history of Japan goes back to about A.D. 461—some authorities consider that the first date to be depended upon. Her early history is so mixed with mythology that it is hard to tell what is fact and what fiction. The conversion of the nation to Buddhism took place about A.D. 600. Yoritomo, the first *shogun*, or generalissimo, rose to supreme power in A.D. 1185—with the Mikado as a figure-head—and from that time until the restoration of the Mikado's power, in 1867-8, old feudal Japan developed and prospered under the rule of the *shoguns*.

Commodore Perry opened the ports of Japan to the outside world in 1853-4. The present constitution of Japan, with its modernized government, dates only from February 11, 1889.

The real curios of Japan are the antiques of the period of *shogun* rule. There are few genuine ones to be found excepting in museums and the old temples. They include chiefly carved ivory, lacquer articles, fans, prints, rings, swords, armor, bronzes and numerous minor things.

The greatest modern curio is the culture-pearl. The process of forcing an oyster to produce a real pearl—in between seven and eight years—was discovered by a college professor. He sold the secret to a Tokyo merchant, who marketed the first pearls in 1898. Since then the business has grown enorously and is of international scope. Pearls of almost any shape or size or color are produced at will.

Canoeing Down the St. Lawrence

A VACATION suggestion for one who's willing to take a chance:

Question:—"I would like to ask you about a canoe trip down the St. Lawrence and around the coast of Nova Scotia.

1. What would an outfit cost? (For one used to roughing it.)

2. Is the St. Lawrence and the passage to and around the coast of Nova Scotia safe or fairly so for a canoe?

3. What chances has a live one for adventure and a little spare cash in these parts?

4. Where can one get accurate relief and topographical maps of the St. Lawrence basin and Nova Scotia?

5. Where is Gaspe Peninsula?

6. Has the Rock of Perce ever been scaled; and if so, when and by whom?

7. Be sure to tell me where to get large-scale maps of section last mentioned."—C. H., Rockwell City, Iowa.

Answer, by Major Belford:—A good workable outfit, including canoe, camping-kit, tent, etc., could be procured for say $300. If you are a close buyer, and willing to shop in one of the second-hand stores in Montreal, you can do it for less.

The trip can be made by canoe, if one is careful. But remember you are practically canoeing in the Atlantic. The St. Lawrence is a mighty big river, and when you enter the gulf you can find all the weather there is, in a rough time. You would practically have to run from headland to headland.

Adventure in the sense of exploiting a beautiful and interesting country is there a-plenty. Of the rough-house variety I have seen no symptoms. The fishermen will take you out deep-sea fishing. If you are lucky you may kill a salmon, or gather a mess of trout in the rivers. Or get a moose in season.

For maps write the Dept. of Interior, Ottawa, Ont.

Gaspe Peninsula is the farthest point of Canada which protrudes into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is the most easterly part of the Province of Quebec.

I have no record of Perce Rock ever being scaled. Certainly I have personally no desire to attempt it. While well worth seeing and one of Nature's wonders, I am content to view it from the sea or from the land. Negotiating the mountain between Perce and Barachois with a Ford car, without brakes, which we descended by trailing behind us a tree by a chain, was stunt enough for me.

Your trip would mean a lot of paddling, a rather strong spice of danger, but much interesting country, very little known, and a quaint type of people. You will hear French in Quebec, and Gaelic in Nova Scotia, spoken by many people. You will see enough codfish to satisfy Boston; you will feel the clear tang of the Atlantic winds; altogether you should have a whale of time. Keep an eye to windward.

"The Great Leprosy Joke"

WELL, anyhow, it's a milder way of getting a rookie's Angora than tossing him in a blanket:

Marine Barracks, Mare Island, Cal.

In glancing over the "Ask Adventure" columns in the January 30th issue I noticed that there was published therein a very sincere inquiry from a young chap of the A. P. O. in regard to employment of guards at Molokai, the leper island.

I have spent several years in the service, both Army and Marine Corps, and have naturally been to "the islands."

On each trip, upon nearing the Hawaiian Islands, the old-timers would invariably start in talking, for the benefit of the recruits, about the fine jobs that were to be had for ex-service men as guards on Molokai.

All through the service this "line" is called "the Great Leprosy Joke." And to hear these old heads talk of the wonderful opportunities, the easy life and the good money quite naturally one knowing nothing of the joke would take heed and consider it real seriously.

But it is as old as the hills, and each trip finds the old-timers ready to spring the joke on some unsuspecting recruit.

I believe that what I have said may prove of some value to you in answering those numerous inquiries from service men in regard to employment on the island of Molokai."—Sincerely yours, L. W. NICKERSON.

Answer, by Mr. Halton:—I am very much obliged for your letter regarding the origin of the "Great Leprosy Joke."

I could not trace down the origin; but all the inquiries have come from service men, and I had presumed that something had been published in some service magazine descriptive of Molokai.

Your letter clears up the mystery, and I am much indebted to you.

Fly-Fishing in Wisconsin

GOOD sport if you know how to go after it:

Question:—"As per the *Adventure* magazine, you give free information concerning fly and bait casting, also live bait. I am rather a beginner in the real fishing sport as mentioned above. May I not ask you for such information and advise as is necessary for this locality?"—OSCAR WERNER, Stanley, Wis.

Answer, by Mr. Thompson:—In your locality the short bait-casting rod used is from four to six and a half feet in length. Use a good multiplying reel and braided silk line. For bass, pickerel and small pike no heavier testing than 16 lbs.; heavier line than that for muskies. All the artificial lures on the market will catch fish in your State, but you must cast in the places they feed, and reel in when the bait strikes the water. A motion is used just like that when you threw a mud ball when a boy; but the minute you release the bait let your thumb drag slightly on the outspooling line, so that it will not backlash and tangle up. When your lure is a few feet over the spot you are aiming at, stop it with firm pressure of the thumb. Learn accuracy at first instead of distance.

For fly-fishing use a light rod for trout and one from five ounces and over for bass. Use artificial flies. For bass, size 6 to as large sometimes as 3/0 and above that for trout. Almost any of the well-known patterns will take fish in the way of flies, also the bass bugs. Lots use small spinner above the fly to make it attract the fish. But it must be very light for a fly rod. Use an enamel line, but it must balance the rod.

Leaders must be of best quality. As with bait-casting, drop the flies gently where you know fish to be waiting for food.

Best live bait is crayfish, minnows and helgramites. They take frogs also. Fish in deep water still fishing, except in the holes just off of rapids. They like to be near logs, or obstacles in the stream or lakes.

Go to a first-class sporting-goods store and have them furnish you with a good outfit. Cheap tackle is very costly in the end.

Mr. Solomons to the Witness Box

THERE'S this to be said about this inquirer: He sure does know what he wants to ask about:

Question:—"Will you please answer the following questions to the best of your ability:

What is the character of the land of the Tanana Valley east to Fairbanks? Is it suitable for agriculture? What is principally grown, and what is the land sold for, and by whom?

Is Nome as busy as it used to be? What is the yearly output of gold valued at?

What can accommodations be secured at in Nome (room and board)?

How far is the Yukon navigable, and when does it freeze up?

How cold does it get in central Alaska?

What furbearers are found in central Alaska?

What is the maximum weight of Kodiak bears (no guesswork)?

Has the mining industry penetrated the Endicott Range?

What is the milage from Dawson to Nome *via* Fairbanks and Tanana?

In which section of the country is the copper district most important?

What steamship companies operate to Alaska?"—E. H. BEHN, Des Moines, Ia.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—The land is alternate mossy tundra and spruce forest, and rolling to hilly. Flats that are dry are capable, on being cleared, of raising crops of hardy wheats and barley, potatoes and hardy vegetables. There is little or no market for such products that is cheap to get to or reliable.

The U. S. Government is conducting agricultural experiment stations in about five places in Alaska, one being near there. Get their pamphlets and learn in detail what you seek. You may take up land *ad libitum* under the regular homestead laws of this country.

Nome has a very small population now. About half a million a year, more than half from dredgers (about twenty) is the output. It will cost you about four to five dollars a day for good room and board in Nome.

The Yukon is navigable from its virtual source at Lake Bennett to its mouth. Steamers now run from the mouth to White Horse, a couple of hundred miles from the head. It freezes up in October.

It gets to 70 degrees below in interior Alaska. It averages about thirty through the Winter (seven months).

All furbearers of northern latitudes are found. Since you don't want guesswork on the maximum weight of Kodiak bears, and as I don't know the number of pounds, ounces, pennyweights and grains of the biggest ever taken, I guess I'll pass that poser.

I knew the first man to prospect in the Endicott Range. His name was Marsh, an assayer, etc., etc., etc., etc. There isn't much up there, so far as developments to date disclose. However, there hasn't been much exploring done.

For mileage from Dawson, *via* Fairbanks, etc.—since you are an accurate person, get the map and step it off with a compass legs set to say five miles to a step, then step sidewise all the time to allow for curves not shown on the map. You will then have the distance as well as the steamboat men.

The copper industry is most important in southern Alaska in a number of places. See Geological Survey Reports, Wash., D. C., gratis. The Alaska Steamship Company, headquarters in Seattle, is the big company.

A two-cent stamp won't carry everywhere. Read Rule I and note sections marked ★ or ✠.

The Ship Chronometer

IT'S what a dog is to a blind man:

Question:—"What is a chronometer and its uses? What is the difference in real time and ship's time, say, for instance, four o'clock and eight bells? I don't understand it.

Has a young fellow much of a chance on a trading-schooner for advancement? Steward, for instance. Are radio operators in big demand?

Is there still much trading going on in the South Seas? Are most of the natives peaceable, and of what different races? Is there any pearl-diving done among these small islands?

Will you please tell me where to get maps of the South Seas—that is, topography maps and charts—and the price of them?"—BYRD K. WALSH, Santa Monica, Calif.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—A chronometer is simply an accurate timepiece, the balance of which is constructed so that heat or cold compensate each other, and the timepiece does not vary in different climates. It is used at sea as an aid to finding position. It is a simple operation with a sextant and almanac to ascertain the precise time by sun or star at the point of observation. The chronometer gives the time it was set to—chiefly Greenwich meridian time—and thence it is a matter of plain comparison to find the difference in time between Greenwich and the ship's position. Calculate fifteen degrees of longitude to the hour of time—that is, a degree to every four minutes, a minute (of longitude) to each 4 seconds of time—and you have the ship's distance east or west of Greenwich, a mighty useful thing to know. Latitude, a very easy problem, completes the pair of lines, which, crossing, give the actual position of the ship where they cut.

Ship's bells originated when sand-glasses were used to measure time. Every thirty minutes a glass ran out and was turned. The bell was struck to mark it. So on, beginning with each fresh watch of men coming on deck for four hours' spell. So one bell marked the first half-hour after the change of watches, which happened at four, eight, and twelve o'clock, and another bell marked the full hour, and was struck as two bells in a pair to indicate the fact. So on right through the watch, until eight bells (eight half-hours) had passed. Odd bells were always struck in one or more pairs for the hours and a single bell for the half, distinctly.

Write Mr. Beriah Brown for information about U. S. A. vessels and employment. I do not handle South Seas. See *Adventure.*

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A QUERY from compadre Frederick Epplesheimer of Roselle Park, New Jersey, asks for the words of that old-time song which he hasn't heard since he was a boy: "Green Grow the Rushes, O!" After considerable digging I came across the song in a little collection published in 1865, bearing all the earmarks of Scots ancestry. Of course, then I had the rare presence of mind to turn to "Rabbie" Burns and found it wi' a' its glory, only under the title of "Green Grow the Rushes, O!" If, as our friend says, the song was popular among the Yankee soldiers during the Mexican War, it's quite easy to understand how the "greasers" came to dub our rookies of that early day "gringos." *

Green Grow the Rashes, O!

There's naught but care on every han',
In every hour that passes, O!
What signifies the life o' man,
An' 'twere na for the lasses, O?

Chorus.
Green grow the rashes, O!
Green grow the rashes, O!
The sweetest hours that e'er I spent
Are spent among the lasses, O!

The warl'ly race may riches chase,
An' riches still may fly them, O!
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O!
Chorus.

Gie me a canny hour at e'en,
My arms about my dearie, O!
Then warl'ly cares and warl'ly men
May a' gae tapsalterie,* O!
Chorus.

For you sae douce! Ye sneer at this—
Ye're naught but senseless asses, O!
The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
He dearly lo'ed the lasses, O!
Chorus.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O!
Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O!
Chorus.

Comrade Clarence Papke of Eustis, Florida, is on the hunt for "The Gathering of the Hoboes in Montreal"—a bit of tramp verse.

Comrade C. G. Crawford of Michigan City, Indiana, is looking for a bit of war verse entitled, "On the Banks of the Nile," the story of a young woman who dressed up in men's clothing to accompany her lover to the war. I never heard of any of them. To your scrapbooks, comrades.

A bashful reader in Cleveland, Ohio, who doesn't want his name mentioned, asks me if I ever heard of a song entitled "The Hoboes' Convention."—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM.
745 Riverside Drive, New York.

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*A fuller discussion of the origin of the term "gringo" appeared in the issue of *Adventure* for March 10. See Camp-Fire, pp. 181-182.—ED.

*Topsyturvy.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

GRAVES, DR. GEORGE C. Last heard from in Callao, Peru in Cerro de Pasco service. Please write.—Address GILSON WILLETS, care of *Adventure* Camp-Fire, 7921 Van Buren St., St. Louis, Mo.

ROOD, CARL S. Last heard of in Seven Troughs, via Lovelock, Nevada, May 12, 1914. At that time was thirty-four years old, six feet tall, heavy set, fair complexion, reddish mustache, light blond hair, blue eyes, one glass however. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address JENNIE RUDD, 1314 East Superior St., Duluth, Minn.

SIEBERT JACK. Last heard of just prior to 1917 on his way to join the Turkish Army. Please communicate with—Address DOUGLAS S. CATCHIM, 3423 Brown St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

JOLLEY, MAJOR WADE. Was with the Queen Beth Regiment at the beginning of the war. Please comminicate with—Address DOUGLAS S. CATCHIM, 3423 Brown St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

GELSTON, RODNEY S. No word since leaving New York C. R. R. office, New York. Please write.—Address GILSON WILLETS, care of *Adventure* Camp-Fire, 7921 Van Buren St., St. Louis, Mo.

SHIRLEY, WILLIAM S. Last known whereabouts Hotel Algonquin, N. Y. C. Was with American Legation, Mexico City, 1919. Your letter returned. Please write.—Address GILSON WILLETS, care of *Adventure* Camp-Fire, 7921 Van Buren St., St. Louis, Mo.

FONTAIN, JACK. Last letter from California. Please write.—Address GILSON WILLETS, care of *Adventure* Camp-Fire, 7921 Van Buren St., St. Louis, Mo.

STEWART, C. J. Last seen in Galveston. Any information will be appreciated.—Address GILSON WILLETS, care of *Adventure* Camp-Fire, 7921 Van Buren St., St. Louis, Mo.

PALEN, CHARLES E. Carpenter. Last heard from in Los Angeles, Calif. Age sixty-three years. Any information regarding him will be appreciated by his sister.—Address MRS. EVA L. PALEN CALDWELL, 73 Surf View Ave., Nahant, Mass.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

PIPPLEY, L. EROLL. Last heard from in Calcutta, India. Most of your letters mutilated by censor. Please write.—Address GILSON WILLETS, care of *Adventure* Camp-Fire, 7921 Van Buren St., St. Louis, Mo.

SULLIVAN, MARGARET. Who advertised for Dolores Leiden. Letter to you returned unclaimed. Write to me.—Address DOLORES LEIDEN, 2249 Franklin St., Denver, Colorado.

HASSON, EARL STEWART. Formerly of Moline, Illinois. Last heard from in February, 1921, from St. Louis, Missouri. Death in family. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MISS BLANCHE G. HASSON, 2413 16th St., Moline, Illinois.

VALDEZ, ALEX. Age about thirty-five. When last heard from was working in Navy Yard and living at 33 Wilson St., Vallejo, California. Any information will be appreciated by his cousin.—Address ANGEL C. FLORES, Company M, 27th Inf., Schofield Bks., H. T.

GALLAGHER, CHAS. J. (Carl or Karl on stage.) Last seen in Nickel Theatre, Bleusy St., Montreal, 1909. Said to have returned to Ottawa in movies there. About five feet seven or 8 inches, curly black hair, slightly bald, good singer. Would be now about forty-eight or fifty. Unmarried in 1909. Little sister Dollie, whom you left on Dorchester St., W., Montreal, would like to hear from you.—Address L. T., 442, care of *Adventure*.

McDEVITT, ANDRES JOHN. Adopted son of Grandma Susie Mc Devitt. Tall, heavily built, dark hair and eyes. Would be about thirty-six now. Will you write to Dollie, now married, giving your address and news.—Address L. T. 442, care of *Adventure*.

FROMME, HARRY K. Sergeant Co. K., 31st Infantry. Last seen Vladivostok, Siberia. Thought you were coming home with me, what happened to you? Write your old pal.—Address "SPIFF," Box 51, Petersburg, Alaska.

CHILDERS, THEODORE R. Please write your old pal who left you in Cincinnati.—Address H. J. C., care of *Adventure*.

MUNRO, JAMES. Native of Glasgow, Scotland, eighteen years of age. Last heard of in Montreal, Canada. Any information will be appreciated.—Address JAMES MUNRO, 102 Buckley Ave., Niagara Falls, Canada.

McCLOUD, JOHN HENRY. (Husband.) Last heard from in St. Paul, Minn., in 1910. Supposed to have gone to either New York City or Glendive, Mont., to seek work. About five feet five inches, weighs 145 pounds, dark complexion, smooth face, black hair, streaked with gray. Now about forty-one years old. Was railroad brakeman and member of Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. Any information regarding his whereabouts will be appreciated by his wife.—Address MRS. JOHN HENRY McCLOUD, St. Paul, Minn.

WOODS, MR. & MRS. W. M., daughter Fannie May, and son Lee. Last heard of were living at 1122 E. Baxter St., Knoxville, Tenn. Any information in regard to any or all of them would be greatly appreciated by their son and brother.—Address JASPER ANDERSON WOODS, 329 West Seventh St., Covington, Ky.

MICKLE, FRANK. (Big Mike.) Why don't you write to your old *tallow pot* who fired for you so long out of Gievres, France, during the World War? I am sure anxious to hear from you.—Address PARSON SOLT, care of *Adventure*.

THE following have been inquired for in either the May 30th or June 10th issues of Adventure. They can get the names of the inquirers from this magazine:

ABRANNO, WESTLY; Arbuckle, Louis McLane; Bennett, Joseph; Carroll, Arden A.; Case, Don; Coffman, Ralph E.; Conner, Justin Chas.; Hauck, George; Hinds, George; Hitter, "Flip"; Hukill, Eugene S.; Kasimir, Haji; King, Capt. Billie: Knight, W. V.; Lee, Preston; Lewis, Arthur C.; Mansfield, Robert Allen; Napier, Harry; Olson, Lawrence, T.; Palmer, Arthur; Perry, Ernest F.; Pouers, Gertrude; Mrs. Reid; Jack E.; Shaw, Robt. E.; Smith, Albert Ernest; Vaughan, Jas.; Wilburth, Harry; Wislin, Joseph and Harry; Yagner, Sam.

MISCELLANEOUS—Belgian; Sailors who occupied Barracks 948 E., Camp Farragut, Great Lakes, Illinois, between the dates of January 10, 1919 and January 30, 1919, can help a disabled gob by writing to LAURENCE K. HYDE, 3324 Aldrich Ave., South, Minneapolis, Minn.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JUNE 30TH ISSUE

The next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE HOLE IN THE ROCK A Complete Novel ***Frank C. Robertson***
Ten thousand cattle rustled from the range—a fighting man's attempt to prove it.

PETER PAN'S PEBBLE ***Mary Gaunt***
In the parched Australian desert one man crawls from the shadow of the rock—and one remains.

FLYING CANNON ***Thomson Burtis***
Bomb-test, and malcontents in camp.

THE WARRIORS OF THE CANADIAN ***Frederick R. Bechdolt***
The Law comes to Texas. Billy the Kid goes "out."

PLAY BALL ***L. Patrick Greene***
Tanks, baseball and an airplane in Rhodesia.

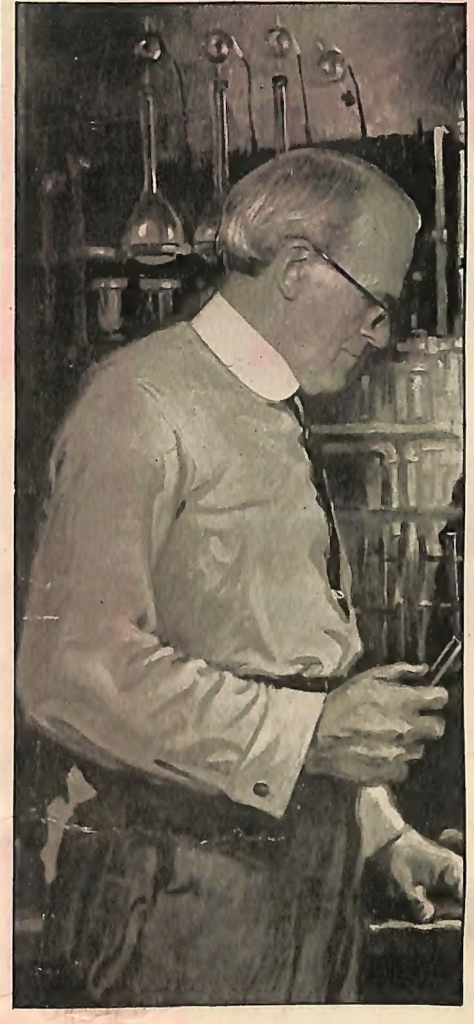
WAR WAMPUM A Five-Part Story Part III ***Hugh Pendexter***
A dangerous game of guile with *Pontiac*.

THE LAST MATCH ***John Beames***
Transport riders fight cold—and a coward.

HULLABALOO ***Alan B. LeMay***
Quick action when the "roll" disappears.

THE PRICE OF LEADERSHIP ***F. St. Mars***
A leopard—and baboon prey.

QUEEN'S GOLD ***A. Judson Hanna***
Manchurian coast—the struggle for the Catherine Plate.



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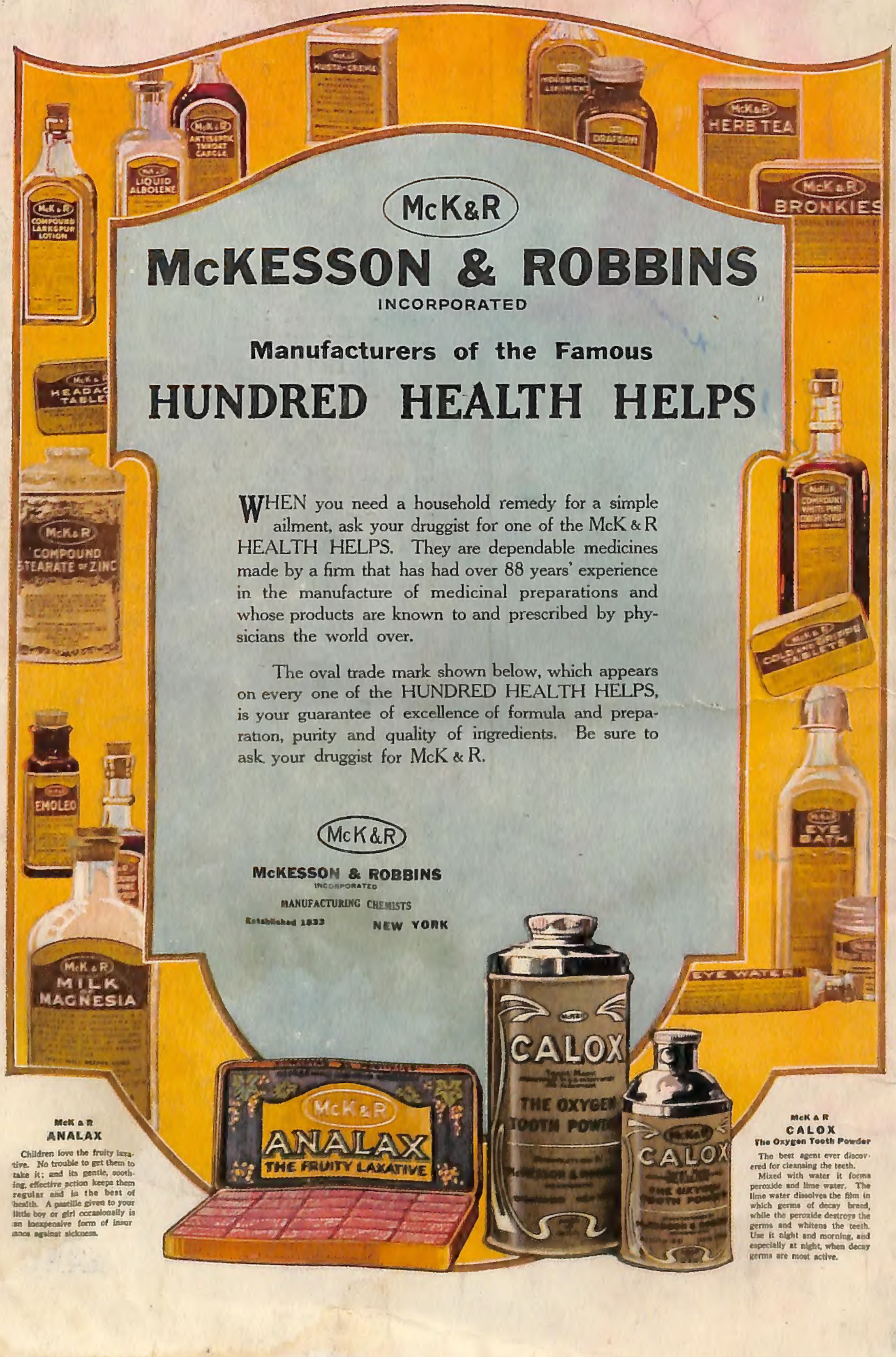
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McK&R HERB TEA
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HEADACHE TABLETS
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EMOLEO
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ADVENTURE